

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL		50
BIBLE, LITURGY AND FAMILY	Deborah Armstrong	52
THE LITURGY IN A LAY COMMUNITY	George Ineson	60
BIBLE READING	Nicolete Gray	69
THE LAITY AND THE BREVIARY	Gabriel Reidy	76
THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH	Daphne Pochin Mould	88
THE WORD OF GOD INCARNATE	H. J. Richards	93
THE PSALMS AND EVERYDAY LIFE	Edmund Hill	99
OUR LADY IN THE SCRIPTURES	Reginald Ginns	105
THE QUEST FOR GOD IN THE JUDEAN DESERT	Roland Potter	115
'LEVIATHAN WHICH JAHWEH MADE TO LAUGH AT'	Joseph Bourke	122
SELECTIONS FROM PÈRE LALLEMANT: II—PERFECTION		130
REVIEWS: Henry St John, R. J. Foster, Edmund Hill, John Higgins		134

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EDITORIAL

THE present number of THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, a double number for August and September, has *Bible and Worship* for its theme. This is a comprehensive subject; its concern is the necessary part played by the Scriptures in God's revelation of himself to men, and in consequence the fundamental importance of the study of that revelation as it is contained in the written Word of Scripture. To say this is not to put forward the Bible and the study of the Bible as in itself the sole ultimate, as the direct and only source, for the individual, of God's Word to men. That would be to by-pass the Church, as in effect the Church was by-passed by Protestantism at the Reformation, with disastrous consequences to Christendom. The Bible can only be understood to the fullest possible depth through the mind of the Church, which alone can penetrate into and give the whole meaning of God's Word.

The mind of the Church finds its most effective expression in the Liturgy. This does not mean that the creeds, which are in fact included in the Liturgy, and other formal dogmatic definitions made by the Church and contained in decrees, catechisms and other instruments of its teaching authority, are of secondary importance. It does mean, however, that the truth embodied in the Church's dogmatic definitions is only made living and effective truth by its personal expression in worship. Our personal worship of God, which is nothing else than our personal share in the Church's common worship, must be offered in and through the Liturgy. This is why Sunday Mass is an obligation on all the baptized, who have reached the age of reason. We cannot obtain salvation unless we worship God, who made us, redeemed us and sanctifies us, and the worship we offer him must be offered in and through Christ in his Church; that is, in and through the Mass in which Christ is and which is in consequence the official act of worship of Christ's Mystical Body, the very heart and centre of its life.

The most perfect way of offering the Mass is by offering it in the spirit and according to the meaning of the words the Church uses in offering it. For priests and religious the Divine Office is integral to their offering of the Mass. The Mass stands as the

central jewel in the diadem of worship which is the offering of Christ to his Father in the Church, his Mystical Body. As members of that Body we are co-offerers with him of his perfect oblation.

Both Mass and Divine Office are profoundly Scriptural in content; they may be described as God's Word in action, the action of Praise, Adoration and Thanksgiving which the Eternal Word continuously and eternally expresses, and expresses, here and now, largely in the inspired words of Scripture. Thus it is part of the priestly and religious vocation to lead the whole Church on earth, in the fullest and most complete way possible, in making this continuous act of worship in and through Christ our Lord. All baptized Christians are able to share in this act at its central point, through the Mass. Many, however, are unable to take part in the surrounding worship of the Divine Office because their vocation, the work to which they are called, prevents them from active participation in it.

Yet there is a growing consciousness in the Church that active participation in the liturgy of the Mass would be far more effective and more deeply achieved if the knowledge of its content and meaning were deeper, and this applies in particular to its Scriptural content. The Holy See has done much in recent years to encourage this more effective participation in the spirit and meaning of the words the Church uses in the offering of Mass. There is also a growing movement among the laity to take, when possible, some part in the Divine Office, as preparation for the offering of the Holy Sacrifice.

Some of the articles in this number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* describe individual experiments by families and communities in ways and means of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures as the way to a deeper knowledge of God. Others are concerned with the approach to the offering of Mass by way of the Divine Office, said either in part or as a whole, in English or in Latin; others again deal with the nature of the Scriptures as the source of God's revealed truth, and therefore as the *material* of worship. All are designed in their different ways to promote amongst Christians, in every state of life, a deeper knowledge of God's Word written and in consequence a deeper union with Christ in the mysteries of his redeeming love. For as St Jerome once wrote: *Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.*

BIBLE, LITURGY AND FAMILY¹

DEBORAH ARMSTRONG

THE title of Bible, Liturgy and Family seems at first not only forbidding but fantastic. Scholars throughout the centuries have devoted their lives to the study of these subjects and will continue to do so till the end of time, so what of value can I say in a short talk?

After a little thought I was able to answer my own question. I think that no family should be without ideas on the subject of the Bible and the Liturgy and also that the future of Christian society is being strongly influenced, if not shaped by such ideas as they have. It may also be true that at present, too many people have too few ideas and too few people too many, in which case we shall all benefit by a pooling of resources.

I must admit at once that I am conscious of large gaps in what I have to say, and I hope that these gaps will be filled by those whose learning and experience and vocation have fitted them to do it. All I can hope to do is to draw some sort of picture of the necessity, to every family, of education in and through the Bible and the Liturgy and to show why religion becomes dead if it is preserved in any other way. What seems to be needed is a clearer understanding of the difference between the Faith lived and the Faith taught; while scholars and educators teach it, families must live it, and I want to show that a living faith grows most surely from the living word of the Bible.

Every Catholic child is born as co-heir with Christ. He is received into this relationship at his baptism and the duty of his parents is to train him to be able to take his own individual place in the Eternal Kingdom he has inherited. In many ways this point of view will cut right across that of the world; the values will be quite different.

When we look at Christ's inheritance in this world, we see a deprived child born to poverty, persecution and obscurity; a brief time of popularity which led to disgrace and execution: and after this nothing less than complete triumph over death through the Resurrection of the body, then the confirmed con-

1 A paper read at the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, September 26, 1957.

version of the first apostles and preachers and lastly the mysterious Ascension of the visible Risen Christ into the Eternal Invisible Kingdom. Clearly the 'happy ending', so to speak, is the most important part of the story from the point of view of inheritance. Through the external events of his life on earth Christ became one with the prodigal children who had lost their true inheritance and, with its glorious close he opens for them the way of return.

Humanly considered, Christ also received as his inheritance the Jewish tradition of religious faith and practice, and as we all know he did not destroy this Old Law but fulfilled it; the struggles and gropings of Jewish Mysticism were brought out into the light of history, and given a measure of rational certainty. Christ, the person who combined in himself perfectly, Divinity and Humanity, gave to the Jews and to mankind the one truly Divine-Human religion. He lived a finite life of infinite significance, he used finite words to signify or point towards the path to the Infinite Truth with which we shall be happy for eternity. He united in his earthly life, and offers to us still in the Church, his Mystical Body, that integration of reason and faith which can alone satisfy our human nature. He gives himself, and through himself the Holy Trinity.

Once we see that this Christ is the brother of our children, that he is one of the family from the moment of the child's baptism (he is so before really) then it may be necessary to revise our ideas of the kind of world in which we and our children live. It is no longer a world of walls and pavements, of mere duties and pleasures, of good and bad, right or wrong, it is one where the physical limitations of mere facts fall off, and by faith and sometimes by experience, often by imagination we all step out into the infinite life of Heaven.

Christ is never absent from this world of significant signs; it also contains the whole Church, the suffering, the militant and the glorious members, and thirdly, it includes the whole of humanity in need of salvation, for Christ was heir to the sins of the world and our children share that inheritance as well.

The greater part of Christ's time on earth was spent in the Hidden Life, and this is a true pattern for the normal family. Each group according to its nature evolves its own patterns of behaviour, occupations, recreations, interests, and its own degree of intellectual emphasis in secular education, but underlying

these and most important of all, is each family's growth in the knowledge and love of Christ, and its friendship with its neighbours in the Kingdom of God, its supernatural development through the sap running in it from the vine of which it is a branch. For this development the Bible, the Liturgy and the Mass are all essential. I am concerned here not with educational theories or biblical learning in themselves, but with the development of the supernatural life in each family. The depth and vitality of this will depend on the degree of union of each member with Christ. It is this union which must be fostered from the very beginning.

As a child grows we show him familiar objects, a sock, a watch, a shoe, an egg-cup, or pictures of these things, and he learns to name them; we teach him to say in his own way 'thank you' for his crust, and at this stage, too, we can show him pictures of our Lord, our Lady and some of the Saints, and teach him their names; he can learn to say thank-you to his Heavenly Father for his crust, and to Christ for his special happinesses. As soon as the child begins to like stories he can be introduced to these in the Bible, and when he can learn by heart, the Gospels, the Psalms and the more interesting historical and prophetic books should provide much of the material to be stored in his memory. Speaking from my own experience, I can say that King David, Sampson, Isaiah, and others are real and significant to me today because they were my companions as far back as my memory goes; this is more significantly true of our Lord. He was made a real person to me from the beginning of my life; so was Alice in Wonderland, but with what a difference; Alice has stayed comparatively the same, while our Lord has grown considerably and should continue to do so.

It is this fact of organic growth towards Christ and with Christ which is so important; the Christ of the child's picture-book is the seed which should grow into the great mustard tree; the love planted in the child's heart can become the pearl of great price for the sake of which he may one day suffer martyrdom. The significance of the Bible stories and pictures, read, learnt, and loved by the child, can only grow as the child grows, and the whole secret of introducing the child to them lies in suggesting this greater reality in a way that he will recognize. Thus the moral aspect must not be emphasized at the expense of general interest,

or emotional appeal exercised to the loss of common sense, curiosity or rational enquiry. And here something must be said about religious art; it is not mere critical superiority which condemns religious pictures which are atrocious when considered as art, it is an awareness that a bad picture conveys absolutely nothing except perhaps an emotional reminder that such a person once existed; a good picture in illustration of a Bible story or a saint's life need not be a work of genius; it should contain truth; the facts it shows can be correct; the clothes, the landscape, the type of figure, and the degree of naturalism or symbolism can be related to the vision of each artist, but these pictures are *important* as they either help or hinder religious development, and in my opinion it is *worse than useless* to present to a child a childish idea of Christ or our Lady or the angels; the pictures we show them should be as splendid and glorious and mysterious as we can find; they must be theologically *true*.

Once the young child has accepted Christ, our Lady, the Saints and the greatest figures and lessons of the Old Testament as a part of the life he lives—in my own experience they had a place in the programme of each day—then the Sacrifice of the Mass follows or fits in naturally; surely this is the truly indispensable preparation for first Holy Communion. When it is said that a child must know the difference between ordinary bread and the consecrated Host, it must not be thought that this knowledge can be acquired quickly, it must be a knowledge of Christ which belongs to the whole seven years of the child's life, and which has grown with him.

There is much learned theology about the Mass, the truth it contains is infinite, the end will literally never be reached, so ordinary people like myself, and children, too, have to take refuge in the words of the Gospels; we cannot go wrong if we start by taking our place round the table at the Last Supper and listening to our Lord speaking; his words themselves do the rest; the essential preparation is enough knowledge of our Lord to be able to love him, and also knowledge of what he did once in his human body and is continuing to do now in his Mystical Body.

If children grow up familiar with the most significant parts of the Old Testament and New Testament, then the Missal will not be strange to them. I once knew a boy who was given a Bible

for his twelfth birthday, and he wrote home to say he was starting at the beginning and intended to read it through. We ordinary people are dependent on the scholars to save us from that labour. But given this properly selected knowledge of the Bible, the liturgical rites will appear as what they are, a formalised public use of words already familiar, and the older we grow the wider and deeper becomes the meaning for each of us. In this programme there is, I feel, very little room for being side-tracked into what one may call popular devotions; we must never turn aside into the shallows where it is so easy to get bogged down in emotions and the merely human aspects of divine things; instead we must plunge deeper into the ocean of infinite truth, one tiny step with each Mass we offer, loving God and his whole creation, praising him in the very words of the psalms sung by Christ himself, allowing the Divine Word to lead us further and further out of this world, towards Heaven.

Here arises the thorny point of liturgical language. All I can say is that in my opinion, as long as the Canon of the Mass is in Latin every Catholic child should learn the prayers at the first moment that he is capable of it, and that the sooner the rest of the Mass is in English the better, because otherwise the children must learn that too. I think the Psalms and the chief hymns of the Liturgical year should be put into English and taught to our children as soon as they learn anything; they are part of Christ, part of the Catholic child's inheritance, a nourishment for the child's soul that will grow as he grows and continue to feed him. How can a strange church language compete in his development with his own language which is assailing him from every side in comics, radio, television, papers, cinemas, advertisements and talk? This seems to me a question of plain commonsense. Christ, together with the Bible and the Liturgy, which contain him and are contained in him, must be enshrined deep in the total nature of a Christian child—only then will he possess the true water of life, always springing up.

Before this can begin to happen in this country there is a lot of work to be done by scholars and teachers. To begin with, a child's Bible, together with his prayer book and first Missal, must be his most precious possession; it must be an attractive book with gold edges and richly coloured pictures, bound in black leather to single it out from other books. I should also like

to see brought out a series of books with short passages for daily reading from:

- (i) the Bible,
- (ii) the Missal,
- (iii) the lives of the Saints, following the Calendar and including when appropriate passages from the missal and the breviary. These could take the form of parallel series which would take two or three years to work through; personally I should put on the cover 'Not to be taken to school'.

The Bible shared and lived with Christ is the chief inheritance of the Christian child but equal to it in importance, building it up, completing it, is the totality of Christ in his Mystical Body, which means the whole Church. The Holy Souls in Purgatory belong here: prayers to them and for them widen the horizon into a spiritual world of real people as well as introducing the idea of death apart from any morbid connections; then there are the Saints: from them come the heroes and heroines, the human proofs of the power of supernatural faith and the efficacy of God's love. Once a child realizes that holiness changes history his religion is less likely to die. Thirdly there is the Church Militant in which the child learns to share with Christ the great work of salvation.

Here the Sacraments of the Church find their place, those great sources from which Divine life flows into the world and overflows outside the Church to save the whole of mankind. In so far as this Divine life is springing and developing in the Christian family, each one will learn to love both God and his neighbour; to belong to the Catholic community and to love those outside it.

So far I have tried to put forward some sort of picture of the place in, and significance to the family of the Bible and the Liturgy of the Church, I have emphasized that the teaching must be alive and significant, that worship should be as real and important as any other activity, that Christian children should, as far as possible, from the beginning be shown a Christian world inhabited by Christ, our Lady, and the Holy Souls and the Saints; a world both physical and spiritual, and almost with boundaries. Obviously the one real boundary is that between what may lawfully be done and what is sinful; but familiarity with our Lord's life and those of the Saints teaches a lot about sin, a hatred of it and an awareness of it. I am certain that in giving

children a rigid moral code of behaviour and religious observance, bristling with venial sins and always threatened by mortal sin, we are causing great damage. Guilt is a crippling emotion and it is vital to guard against planting that in a child's heart instead of love and trust. All parents find it a great puzzle how to teach a child to follow Mass. It seems to be the obsession of the moment, a fact which is hardly surprising, for, as now conducted in most parish churches, the Holy Sacrifice is bound to come a very bad fourth in attraction and interest to the comic, the cinema, and television. If, however, parents can attempt to follow a little of the programme I have suggested, I think there will be less attention left over for these rivals; also, I believe they would cease to be attractive.

The tragedy just now seems to be the delegation of the responsibility for religious teaching by parents to schools. Religion has become a subject taught by specialists instead of a life lived by families. How many of those rows of model Catholic school children, doing outwardly all the right things at the right moment in church, scrap the whole thing and begin to live when they go out into the world?

But the boys who *play* at David and Goliath will have less time for Davy Crockett, and in the future they are more likely to tackle the Goliaths of sin and suffering than the Davy Crockett fans.

Perhaps the root of the trouble and perplexity now is the over-rational and over-active life of our days. We want to see our children's religion taking effect in a stereotyped pattern of behaviour. This seems to be the opposite of Christ's example; he told stories, and made promises, gave warnings, and suffered everything a human being can be called to suffer, but he never forced any man to do anything, except when he drove the money-changers out of the Temple; in all this he is the great Exemplar for parents and educators.

Another important relationship between Bible, Liturgy and family is that they are the best source of family unity. However outwardly disunited a family may appear, it is bound together by invisible truths at all levels. The union between parents should be fruitful mentally and spiritually as well as physically; their union with the children is physically a fact and mentally and spiritually there is a unique relationship which should be fruitful too. But

in a state of sin what is best can become what is worst, and the closeness of family ties can lead to more bitterness and misery than happiness; what seems obvious to the parents is not so to the children, who cannot remain for long content to mirror their parents; so that in spite of the actual ties, the family must find its true source of unity, its real fruitfulness outside itself, in Christ and in the Church. Together they form one branch of the vine which is Christ, his life-giving sap runs through them all, and it is his supernatural life which brings to fruition the family relationships; for this reason it is so vitally important that families should be nourished on the Word of God in the Bible, in the liturgical rites and offices of the Church, and especially the Mass. These words, the stories, the psalms, the Gospels and so on, have in themselves an infinite significance, they come to mean to each soul at any particular moment just what that soul is capable of receiving; in this way a daily reading of the Bible can feed all sides and stages of natural development. The job of parents is not to chisel out a wooden puppet and say: 'Look, Lord, what a beautiful Roman Catholic I have made for you'—rather we have to keep on showing God and all truth to the child, teach him to love Christ and to desire the water of life. We have to prepare the good soil on which the sower's seed will fall.

The great problem remains as to how and in what form the seed is to be prepared and sown. To return to the subject of Christian art, if our children, the Christian artists of tomorrow, were truly nourished on a biblical understanding of the truths of faith, how much richer and more alive our Christian art would be. If the great stories of the Bible, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament had been basically entwined with the child's imagination in those days when the boundaries between dream and non-dream are faint, how vividly seen and felt might be his pictures and carvings; and if the significance had been there in embryo at the start, what blazing and inspiring signs would the fine flower of his work give us. The articles of the creed, the events of the liturgical year, the needs of the stricter liturgical ceremonies, can all be a source of the most lively creative inspiration provided they contain a living significance for the artist. The great doors of the early medieval Cathedrals, much of the glass and some of the great Byzantine Cathedrals could almost be described as Bibles in stone and glass. It is hard to imagine a

better way of teaching the truths of Faith. For that truth which is Christ is neither as dry as mere words and statements nor as mushy as the plaster statue, it belongs to the realms of experience at a multitude of levels from the joy of the baby in his tinkling rattle, to the ecstasy of a Saint who has been carried beyond any common experience but is granted one personal to himself. The world into which we may step as heirs of Christ is a world of that freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. This is the infinite world of life in abundance, given to every Christian family in the Bible and the Liturgy.



THE LITURGY IN A LAY COMMUNITY

GEORGE INRSON

TO discover the meaning it is sometimes better to walk round the city like the children of Israel round Jericho than to attack the walls directly with battering rams and force of arms. So we shall be talking about the subject rather than on it, about the growth and effect of the Liturgy in the daily life of a particular lay community and the personal experiences of some of its members.

For many years we lived our life together with no accepted religious beliefs and our background was therefore opposed to anything in the nature of a liturgical action—we believed that a gesture or a word which did not spring from our own personal need or experience was a measure of our insincerity and was to be avoided if at all possible. Yet, strangely enough, it was from this very soil that the Liturgy grew, making itself felt, in the first case, as an emptiness in our life; we wished to express something together which seemed inexpressible, like a man without legs might wish to dance or a dumb man sing.

There was also the growing need to relate ourselves in some way to the hidden sources of life beyond the narrow sphere of individual consciousness; not to an impersonal abstraction but to that which was more deeply personal. We wished to enact together our hope of wholeness, in the intuitive awareness that this would predispose us to its realization. When we met the Mass and the psalms of the Divine Office the meeting was

almost a recognition; here was a miraculous fulfilment of that which we had known by its absence.

Nine years have elapsed since that time and we have watched the liturgical life of the Church take up our life together and refashion it into a total relatedness; between our work and our prayer, between each and the other, the inner and the outer, the Community and the Church. The sung Mass on Sundays and Feast Days, the dialogue Mass in the week and the recitation in English of the Benedictine Day Hours have become the heart and bloodstream of the Community life and the yearly liturgical cycle is continually showing us the meaning of the movement of growth and change of which we are all a part.

It seems that there are three ways of understanding this pattern of change inherent in all life, the three ways corresponding in some degree to three aspects of Man; it is clear, however, that any one without the other two would lead us into a false position—they are in reality three aspects of a single movement of life.

The first is the rhythm of natural life; the seasons of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter created by the movement of the Sun, the monthly cycles created by the Moon, the movement of each week and the rise and fall of each day. In man there is the longer growth from birth to old age and death containing the many shorter rhythms of his instinctual life.

The second is the pattern of psychological change; we respond, move and change or resist and die in each new situation. These changes also have their own laws of movement; our moods, intuitions and dreams, for instance, are not haphazard variations from a fixed and static thing we call our 'character', but the buoys indicating the hidden rocks and currents to the ship at sea.

The third is the liturgical life of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ drawing all things to a universal communion. In the Mass, the yearly cycle of change is related to the daily act of the eternal mystery (which is unchangeable because it is Life itself); in the Divine Office there is the daily rhythm of the different Hours, the changing psalms for each day of the week and the yearly progression from the Annunciation to All Saints Day. The liturgy is a universal song or dance or praise to our Creator, a continual cry for mercy, the mysterious source of our life, the crowning fulfilment of meaning drawing our lives together into a single purpose.

In the giving of ourselves to this *Work of God*, as St Benedict calls it, we open ourselves to the creating power of grace; God works on us, in us and through us, both as individuals and as a Community. It is this experience of the Liturgy as an integral part of one's whole life that we shall now be talking about but it is necessary to emphasize that there is an important difference between the experiences of a person living under the influence and power of the Liturgy and the Liturgy itself. We shall not, in other words, be making theological statements. Also because we shall be considering primarily the longer cycle of the seasons this does not imply that it is in any way of greater significance than the daily or weekly cycles.

We do not know what is coming to us, we have been prepared for this in the ground of our being but we have not understood. We have been waiting without knowing we have been waiting and then suddenly the Angel appears bearing the Word of new life. If we can say with Mary *let it be done unto me according to thy word* there is a mysterious conceiving in the soul as the power of the Most High overshadows us. We are not aware of what has happened, only that there is a moving of new life below the daily stream of everyday life; there is a part which waits and a part which does not know.

The summer is past, the trees have shed their leaves, the cattle are in the stalls and the plough in the ground—the outflowing exuberance of long days of harvest has turned back into itself and it is then that the expectation of Advent arises within us.

Our Lady waits in silence
With the unborn child;
Deep in the earth we hear the heartbeat
Of that which is to come.

The sap returns to itself,
The exuberance of summer's growth
Dies back exhausted
Into the enveloping winter.

Seed in the ground,
Plough in the furrows,
The birds flown;
The trees the sleeping evidence of hidden life.

Be glad, O daughter of Sion,
Rejoice, O daughter of Jerusalem;
The earth will be opened
And bud forth the Saviour.

In that day our earth shall yield her fruit,
The mountains shall flow with sweetness,
The hills with milk and honey,
Ourselves with light.

Thirsting for the waters
We seek the place of our Lady's waiting;
The work conceived by the Spirit
Is completed in the silence.

Out of the silence breaks forth the joy of the birth, the Word is
made flesh; unique in time yet continually with us.

For years it seemed, it had been like this,
Driven across the face of the land
Driven by the dead hearts of men,
The unleashed lust of death
The hunger and the cold.

Through the land barren of hope they walked
To the cities of despair,
The streets worn smooth and hard
By dull respectable feet
Moving aimlessly over the sealed earth.

Her time was near at hand;
Anxiously he knocked at closed forbidding doors,
Praying to a distant God for rest and shelter.
But all was silent
Under the night sky.

In their last extremity
A heart opened:
A door opened:
In a backyard shed the Virgin brought forth the Child
And a burning light sprang up to heaven.

O heart, exult with joy!

For a love is born within us which will burst the bars of iron;

Waters have broken out in the desert

And the cry of the newborn Child

Has brought to light the hidden things of darkness.

But we do not stay here; the new life within us begins to grow and in the growing meets the hard obstructions of our fallen nature. We are in the lonely separated crisis of consciousness; it is a time of struggle, prayer, choice and suffering—the joy of Christmas is far away in a distant forgotten land. The Crucifixion. The dereliction and the end.

He could see them coming,

The crowds that would surround him,

Surge over his soul in waves of darkness

Driven from the extremities of time

And the far corners of the earth.

He asked in anguish,

To fly from this bitter choice

To the silence of the Father;

But the silence turned his face

Back to the valley of men.

The crowd was at the gates

Armed with the staves of darkness

To destroy the light;

His brother with unseeing eyes

Betrayed him with a kiss.

The others had slept or fled,

Unable to meet the choice;

One only followed him from afar

But he warmed his hands by the fire

And in fear denied him.

Angry voices rose and fell about him

Trying to put out the light within

By destroying light itself;

Suffering unmoved with head bowed to love

He left them free to choose.

They chose their death in his death
Mocked his head with a crown of thorns
And his back with a cross;
 But the women wept
 And his heart was breaking.

They stripped him of his garments
And nailed him to the wood,
Raising it upon a hill;
 Those he loved stood sorrowing,
 The soldiers dived in waiting.

In the last agony of loneliness
And an infinity of separation
He bound himself to the suffering;
 To the man alone with despair
 To the woman left with child in the wake of battle.

It has been achieved;
The gates of hell had been cast down
By the power of love;
 He hung his head and returned his spirit
 To the silence of the Father.

It is cold and dark in the tomb
And the anger of men far distant
Like the faintly remembered echo of a dream.
It is over;
There is no way and no need of a way,
No need for before and after,
Only the empty silence.
There are no choices now,
Between the accepting and the turning away,
The seeing and the rejecting,
The communion and the hatred;
All has been dissolved
Into the stillness of an absence.
A turned in waiting
Where there is no thing to be waited for,
An emptiness without beginning or end
The other side of God.

There is no doubt in our hearts or minds but that this is the end and our soul is weary with grief, making her way to the tomb on Easter morning; but the tomb is empty and the Church cries out her Alleluia of deliverance. He has risen! It is a miracle so far beyond our comprehension that it is only the Church that is able to take us up into its mystery and to teach our bewildered minds to bow in adoration.

We have tried to fight the mastery which things of this world have over us, to see through the barriers of ignorance to that which is real, to the source of life. And then through the power of Christ we are taken to the Cross—our weakness recoils from the suffering but his power takes us in our weakness and nails us to the wood—to the extent to which he has prepared us. We are taken into the tomb and the things of this world no longer have mastery because they are no longer there, we are held in a suspension of understanding, seeing, feeling and hearing so that we hardly know what we are or what is happening to us. Mysteriously out of this darkness, he rises within us and we are born again—by water and blood through the power of the Spirit—but this new life that has been born is so hidden to our normal sight that we are aware of it only by inference and by the subtle changes which begin to take place in our spiritual constitution. We do not rejoice in the world of the senses, as at Christmas, but in the innermost sanctuary, in the upper room—our outer senses are mystified, at sea, bewildered, because the soul has retired within, waiting for the Bridegroom, for the marriage of Pentecost. So we wait in the upper room, our eyes fixed on the vision of the resurrected Christ, our body tethered outside so that it will not wander off too far in search of the sweet grasses.

Teach us, O Lord, to wait with patience, to keep in the upper room, to prevent our eyes from straying from thee.

I who was born in the depths of winter's silence,
Struggled to come to life,
Lost and was born again in the dying;
Like one who listens for the longed-for footstep
Wait the fulfilment of the Promise;
The scales cover my eyes,
I am separated from the green of the leaf
And the blue of the sky.

I wait with hope and no hope
For the Promise of breaking the stubbornness
Bestowing gladness, dispelling fear,
Cleansing the heart with dew.

The sky greys,
The note hesitates, unsure of where to find its complement;
I face unlimited choice without the possibility of choice;
There is only the waiting
With the eye fixed to the Promise.

I expected and did not expect the heavens to open;
But the marriage was not like this;
He came in the closed room,
The waiting hidden room,
The Fire
Entered the womb.

I was bewildered and did not know
But there was that in me which knew
And that which was known.
Let not your heart be troubled nor afraid,
He will teach you all things,
Alleluia.

I was fed with the fat of wheat,
Filled with honey out of the rock;
The Lord thundered from the heavens,
The Highest gave his voice;
In the arid waste
The fountains of water appeared.

Out of the door,
Through the door of the sheepfold
Led to life,
Life abundant and flowing over;
The doors of heaven were opened
And we ate the bread of angels.

Into the market place,
Into the field and workshop;

Here is the testing
The fashioning and the wroughting,
The problem set brought to completion.
What has been sown
Grows to fruition,
The new seed set and harvested.

Now we follow the outer dance—
No longer the struggle to reach a foothold,
Explore the unknown uninhabited land,
Establish a camp on the mountainside—
Now we are turned to the world of men,
To the healing and the harvesting,
The joy and the sorrow;
The floors shall be filled with wheat,
The presses overflow with wine and oil.

The Spirit breatheth where he will;
Thou hearest his voice
But knowest not whence nor whither—
The pattern of the days unfolding
Holds us to the dance
Shows us the step but not the shape.

The body of Christ
Lives in the dance
Dances in the love of each for the other
The love which overflows from an opened heart
Holds yet does not hold,
Forgives and does not judge;
Reaches over the isolation
Free as the bird in a cloudless sky
Possessing nothing;
The love which builds
The new Jerusalem.

And so begins the long season of Pentecost, the time of working out and building, of bringing to fruition, of harvesting that which has been sown, of the dying back and completion of All Souls and All Saints. It is the time when the stage has been set and we are

called to a common action together after the long preparation of waiting, of solitary struggle and mysterious vision.

Perhaps 'common action' may give us a clue to the fuller and more living experience of the liturgical life of the Church. A liturgical 'movement' by itself is somehow a sterile counterfeit of a living organism, only too likely to lead to the pride and bickerings of an esoteric perfectionism. When we meet round the altar to receive the bread of life we are by this act committing ourselves to each other as members of a single Mystical Body and the Liturgy is thus both the source and the flowering of this giving of ourselves. To give and to open with the whole man—with our heart and body as well as our mind—is this where we begin?



BIBLE READING¹

NICOLETE GRAY

THE Bible reading which I want to write about, is that which I have practised, the Bible reading of parents and children together; which is indeed the only way in which I have read the Bible—apart from the experience of listening to the lessons in the Church of England as a child, and some rather unsuccessful attempts to read parts to myself in later years. As a family we have read it daily, in principle—though in practice there have been a good many gaps—for ten years or more—that is, from earliest childhood in the case of the youngest, to manhood in the case of the eldest child. In this paper I want to offer some reflections on our experience in the hope that they may be useful to others. Our main experience, that constant Bible reading from childhood is overwhelmingly a good thing, is something which surely goes without saying. I propose discussing practical questions of how it is best done; and suggesting also the ways in which I believe that we have particularly profited. I would like to stress that in doing this I am talking about things which are almost total unknowns to me, so that I wish to make my points in a very tentative way. Firstly, the Bible itself is an unknown; after one or even two or three readings of a book or parts of a

book of that length, how much does one know or remember, even if it were an ordinary book? We have never studied it in any scholarly way. And then it is not an ordinary book, it contains God's revelation to men; to all sorts of men of every tongue, and race, and way of thought, to all the generations between us and our Lord, and to all those hundreds or thousands perhaps of generations to come; indeed the full potentialities of meaning even of any part is surely beyond the grasp of any one man at a particular time. One has only to start to read, say, the *Moralia* of St Gregory to realize how utterly different, indeed undreamt of, may be the approach of another generation. One hopes to find whatever is accessible to us, the revelation of the Holy Spirit to our generation or temperament. So that in this sense I see Bible reading as an exploration into the unknown. The second unknown about which I have to talk is myself, and even more unknown, my children. How can one tell which are the words or stories or visions which have altered one's mind, or disentangle the effects of Bible reading from those of school teaching, the liturgy or familiar religious pictures? One can only guess, and that is all I hope to do.

When we started our reading we made three assumptions; they were I think made without reflection, but they still seem to me to be good, so it may be useful to give the reasons and ways in which I have found them right. We have always aimed at reading all the Bible, not specifically the whole Bible, but every sort of book, and in particular the Old as well as the New Testament; actually we have always read one of the Gospels between Christmas and Easter, and the other books rather unsystematically during the rest of the year. Secondly we have always read liturgically, if I do not misuse the word; I mean formally, with a prayer at the beginning and the end, and in common. Thirdly we have assumed that it should be a family affair.

To take the first assumption; I think we have all wanted to read the whole Bible because it is after all our inheritance, given to us by God. One naturally wants to know what is there. Children too have a great curiosity which is often underestimated; they want to know everything that is there, even lists of names and laws and measurements rather than to feel that things are being left out; at least that is my experience. Then they need the variety. The Gospels are direct and concentrated, the heart of the matter,

but we cannot stand too much direct reality. I do not think it would be very possible to read only the Gospels daily with children, so that the reading would be all the time alive to them. Whereas the rest of the Bible illuminates the Gospels from every side, enlarges the historic scale, repeats the message in a different way, so that coming back to the Gospel words and story one sees it anew. The references to the Old Testament by our Lord or St Paul have not only the meaning which can be explained by telling or looking up the story referred to, but are more alive and far more memorable if Sara and Agar and Isaac and Ismael, for instance, are real people, known in their context in the history of Israel. Or, if one starts with the first chapter of St Matthew, the list of names—Judas among the sons of Jacob, Obed begotten of Booz and Ruth, the unknown Jechonias begotten in the transmigration of Babylon—conjures up all those generations, some so grand and well-known, others obscure and presumably ordinary, and the Covenant, and the waiting, and the failures, and the promise; God's plan is evoked by the bare list. Or again the cry of St John the Baptist, 'Behold the Lamb of God', must, if you have read the other books, evoke the lamb of the Passover killed in Egypt, and eaten standing in haste, and also the Lamb of the Apocalypse who has power to break the seven seals of the book. Equally the New Testament references give significance to the Old Testament stories. I do not think that one needs necessarily to point these things out. That it seems to me is done best of all by the Liturgy, particularly the Holy Week Liturgy where the Old Testament people and incidents and symbols are recalled and enlightened over and over again. Taking part in the Holy Week rites is I feel almost part of Bible reading. Then in detail, and throughout the year in the Mass, in the vision of Isaias, the remembrance of offerings of Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech, the Bible is drawn into the action which is the present, immediate centre of our religious life. All those other sacrifices of Noe, and Gideon, and Elias, and the elaborate descriptions of ritual illumine and are illuminated by the sacrifice of the Mass. That seems to me to make the difference between a Catholic and non-Catholic reading of the Bible: through the Mass Bible-reading becomes connected with life, present, personal action, God's and our own.

Turning to our second assumption, the advantage of a liturgical reading is that it differentiates it from other reading in a formal

way, recalling that it is God's book by asking his blessing. Because it is explicit one avoids the sort of reverence which is artificial and sentimental, which can divorce religion from life, any feeling of a need for a 'Bible voice'. The advantage of family reading is rather the same. The family, unlike the school, is a real and continuing unit, the background of real life, and one which is not grown out of, since children start to found new families almost as soon as they have grown out of those into which they were born. The characteristic of family reading to my mind is that it is something common and equally shared, not a teaching by anyone except the book. We all share in the reading aloud and in choosing the next book to read and the reading is, with the common meal, the focus of daily family life. A final very obvious point: one can read aloud, in daily chapters, books, such as the Wisdom books, which require surely very great perseverance to read to oneself. It is much easier too to maintain a practice if it is shared.

But one also runs into difficulties. It seems to me now that my children are older, some of them grown up, that it was all very simple when they were young. Then the difficulties were mainly physical; to find the time between bed-times and cooking the dinner to gather them all together and keep the baby reasonably still. They were interested by everything, they liked the repetition and the names and the detail and the exploration, they were prepared to go through many of the books that are often thought most difficult to read, Leviticus and Paralipomenon and the Apocalypse. They listened and questioned and remembered in part; but as they grow up they also want to understand. That means of course that they want to read different books. Curiosity has been satisfied. They know, more or less, what the whole thing is about. Now we are apt to not to listen to difficult parts. One is up against a question of selection. And here I would like to ask a series of questions to which I do not know the answer. Would it be good to read passages only, from the prophets? We read Ezechiel the other day and I wondered if we would have profited more from parts only. We did try once reading the Breviary lessons from Isaias in Advent; they were much shorter than what we normally read and longer passages would have interested everyone more, I think. We have not tried any other selection. Certainly it is something that one cannot make oneself;

I would say too that one planned for a single year would not give one enough of the Bible. And I would like always to have read and re-read the whole book. Then one wonders whether it would not be good to read bits of both Testaments together sometimes; some of the passages which the Church has associated together, the association of which is so rich and illuminating, backwards and forwards, in so many ways, but which in the ordinary way the laity scarcely hears. One is aware of the association of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiasticus and Proverbs with our Lady, in the Liturgy of the Masses of her feasts, but not for instance of the passage in Isaias which is such a wonderful commentary on the Ascension 'who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one with his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength? I that speak justice and am a defender to save. Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone'. Or again that extension, intensification as it were, of the vision of our Lord at the Transfiguration with his face shining as the sun and his garments white as snow, which is created by recalling the Apocalypse, how the angel took St John up in spirit to a great and high mountain; and showed him the holy city of Jerusalem, which had no need of the sun because 'the Lamb is the light thereof'. The Church has her inspired usage of the Bible; one would like to know it better and know how to show it to one's children.

Then again as a family grows older there arises the question of a commentary. On the one hand children (and oneself) may want to know all sorts of questions of fact, according to their bent of mind; on the other hand they may need some sort of commentary that will open their eyes. Often enough we find ourselves reading chapters out of which some of us are consciously getting very little; though I feel that here is something of which one can never be sure. In this question of a commentary there is one point on which I am quite clear; it is not the parent's job to provide it. He is no more competent to do so than he is to make selections and the danger of falling into error is obvious. Moreover, it seems to me most important that Bible reading should not in any way be a lesson, but as I stressed before, a common experience and exploration. We have found the new *Catholic Commentary* very useful for understanding the text and for historical questions;

a good many other questions are perhaps as well left unanswered. I feel myself that the Epistles should be studied and that this could and I expect very often is very well done at school. But there remains the need for the other sort of eye-opening commentary which today I believe needs to be one which will give one something of the Church's symbolic interpretations of the scriptures. What we would like is something from the Fathers. In this what I am asking for is perhaps just some form of the Matins of the Breviary in English. Certainly there is one other difficulty that I have that perhaps this would solve. We have never read the psalms. That is my fault; the children have asked for them but I have felt that to read them straight through was not the right way to read them and yet I have known no other way. Again, one would like to get to know and participate in the Church's use of the Psalter.¹ I do not wish to suggest by all this that the straightforward reading of the Bible is not both possible and increasingly enriching throughout family life; only that it could perhaps be even further enriched.

There is a final very practical point that I should like to raise here. When children are young they are normally at home or together and live a more or less self-contained life. As they are older some go out or go away and friends and acquaintances come to stay or to meals. We usually have our reading directly after dinner (before homework-finishing and washing-up). It has never been decided what proportion of the family constitutes a quorum, nor on what principle our guests come in for reading or it gets put off for that night, most often the latter. One would like to rely in these matters on some sort of common custom, instead of depending on one's individual discretion or organization or cowardice.

Finally I come to the most hazardous part of my paper: the attempt to estimate what sort of difference the Bible has made to us. One thing is certain; its influence has been very diverse, varying according to the temperament of each member of the family. They like different books, remember different passages and characters, interpret what they have liked and learnt in different ways. I tried recently to find out what each felt he had learnt about the fundamental theme of the Bible, the idea of God.

¹ It was suggested at the Conference that a psalm, taken from one of the offices for the day, might be substituted for a prayer at the beginning or end of the reading.

One said God is a voice, another God is silent (very much in accordance with their own propensities); the immediate thought of the first was of the revelation on Mount Sinai, the cloud on the mountain, the noise of the trumpet, louder and louder, the people waiting round, and Moses when he came out of the thick cloud, where God was, having his face so shining from the reflection of God's glory that no one dared approach him, and he had to veil it. To the other the incidents which came first to mind were all manifestations of God's power: the Flood, and the resurrection of the dry bones in Ezechiel, the stories of Ananias and Saphira, and of the Conversion of St Paul in the Acts. To another it was the visions of God in heaven in the prophets, and particularly in the Apocalypse, which seemed above all to illuminate his idea, but he stressed the many-sidedness of the biblical impressions. Another was pre-eminently aware of the Bible as the progressive revelation of God. They told me that it cut out the anthropomorphic idea of God—the Michelangelo-Blake idea of the bearded superman which it is so difficult to avoid. I would say that we have got a tremendous, and surely ineradicable, impression of the power and immediacy of God, of otherness and the wonder, which that arouses; of the immense bulk and scale of the idea of him. In fact the visions and the messages and the actions recorded by and among all those very human biblical people brings to life—or rather keeps alive and nourishes—one's *imaginative* comprehension of religious truth; an immensely important side of our minds which catechetical teaching cannot touch.

A second fundamental theme is the working of God in history (a particularly important theme since our educational bias is to see everything historically). The children tell me that the Bible has impressed upon them the sense that God has planned history from the beginning. We have read Genesis more often than any other book, but throughout the historical books of course one follows the plan, and God's amazing patience with the endless defections of his chosen people, until finally in the Apocalypse one sees a glimpse surely of history as it is seen from heaven, with our Lord as the great protagonist. As the youngest child said, the Bible teaches you that story books are right to have a happy ending—perhaps a disconcerting sidelight on the pessimism which seems to be normal in her generation.

Finally they told me that the Bible gives a radical view of life. One disagreed with this, but even he agreed that it impresses an awareness of the devil and of Hell—and on this it was of course the New Testament and our Lord's words which they quoted to me. They defined a radical view as a sense of the gulf between good and evil, that there is no in-between of the choice between being marked by the cross, or by the sign of the Beast. I would stress that these remarks are not thought out or balanced judgments—merely what was uppermost in the mind at the moment.

The Editor, when he asked me to write this article, asked me whether I found that the Bible gave the young an apprehension of the meaning of sin and the redemption. I would say that it seems to me to inculcate a sense of sin as defined in the previous paragraph, but not any sense of personal sin or guilt. It seems to me to enrich enormously an understanding of the redemption which has its normal focus in the Mass and in the Holy Week re-enactment.



THE LAITY AND THE BREVIARY¹

GABRIEL REIDY, O.F.M.

READERS of Sir Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* may perhaps recall the Dwarf in the poem, and 'how much he marvelled' to find that the wounded opponent of Lord Cranstoun,

'... a knight of pride

Like a book-bosomed priest should ride.'

And the context reveals that he

'thought not to search or staunch the wound

Until the secret he had found.'²

Ignoring the fact that 'the mighty book' in this instance was none other than a magic book of spells by Sir Walter's medieval namesake Michael, and attending to the simile alone, we learn from the poet's own explanatory but confusing note, that 'The *book-a-bosom* priests were those who went to a distance to baptize

¹ A Paper read at THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference, September 1957.

² *Canto* III, viii.

or marry with the *Mass-book* in their breasts'.³ Without any pedantic head-shaking in the direction of Abbotsford we may pass from the wounded knight to a more familiar modern figure, that of the travelling cleric, not *book-bosomed* perhaps, so much as *book-pocketed* or *book-brief-cased*. His fellow-Catholic will scarcely mistake this book for the immensely more bulky *Mass-book*, or even the reduced version of it he himself carries to church; non-Catholics often do mistake it for a Bible, and deserve more marks for their error than they are likely to get from us; very many of the educated today, whatever their religion, know that it is some kind of prayer-book, and may even know what it is called. One might perhaps venture to say that 'priest and breviary' is a conventional symbol today just as 'priest and (some sort of liturgical) book' was to Scott. The priest in the corner of the railway carriage retiring into his breviary in a manner, subtly, if not markedly different from the manner in which he retires into *The Tablet* or *The Times*, the priest withdrawing from company to pace under the elms, and mutter, book in hand, the priest more fussed at having mislaid his 'little black leather-covered volume' than at the loss of his spectacles—all these scenes are familiar enough to justify one in closely associating the priest and his breviary, and regarding the latter as a typically priestly book. But what, one may ask, have the laity to do with the breviary? What can it be to them save part of the sacerdotal mystery, seen from a distance and the outside with reverential awe, but little curiosity? Its appearance merely serves to modulate conversation into a lower key—'We must not distract father from his Office.' Perhaps my choice of title is sufficient to indicate that I have cast myself in the part of the Dwarf, to marvel a little, and possibly to occasion marvel. At all events let us start with the notion of the breviary as 'the priest's prayer-book'.

The present provisions of Canon Law, apart from all else, make the breviary a *vademecum* for clergy in Major Orders, as also for solemnly professed religious of both sexes. Of the small shelf-ful of volumes containing the liturgical texts and order of the Western Church, it alone has become a necessary part of every priest's personal luggage. A Missal, *pace* Sir Walter, need not be lugged around in the same way; the priest expects it to be provided for him with the rest of the altar-furniture. He carries

3 *Ibid.* note.

a Ritual when bound on the sort of sacramental mission Scott apparently had in mind but he does not rely on it for his personal prayers. The Pontifical need only be included in the episcopal bag. As for the Roman Martyrology, in spite of the *laudabiliter* in the rubric I doubt if more than a negligible minority of priests make a habit of inserting it into their daily Prime *extra chorum*. But there is no mystery about how or why the breviary alone is so closely connected with the priest as to become—in *un*-Scholastic language—his (wellnigh) inseparable accident.

There is no intrinsic reason why any of the books mentioned should come into lay hands; they are needed to codify a text and fix an order, and are primarily intended to help those who are deputed as leaders and mediators in public worship. The faithful need not even be sufficiently literate to be able to make use of them. Moreover, their presence at and share in the common sacrifice and prayer can be secured without their being able to do so. We have, however, to take into account the actual development of the church in our parts. Here the prevalence of literacy may be presumed, and also a tendency to stress (even to over-stress) the value of 'following' the liturgy in the sense of understanding its verbal and conceptual, as distinct from its symbolic, content. In the light of these facts we must view the extraordinary growth in the use of the popular missal, precisely as a *recent phenomenon*, and one that cannot be taken for granted and left unexplained. Containing, as it does, the text of Mass, the missal might justly be regarded as a far more typically priestly book than any other, yet no one is any longer astonished or scandalized to see it in the hands of all. Whatever abuses may be found in propagating the use of the missal, it has been and still is a powerful instrument in helping the laity to realize and share more actively in the common sacrifice. It has become a layman's prayer-book, and I suppose that the majority of missals published today is intended rather for the layman in the nave than for the priest at the altar. This change has occurred in a short time and has successfully overcome many obstacles. There seems to be nothing intrinsically absurd in supposing that a subsequent phase of liturgical growth may include, or even be characterized by popularization of other liturgical collections, pre-eminently the breviary and the ritual. Comparing missal with breviary as anthologies of prayer, surely the latter is the broader and fuller

source, and opens more doors to the soul in quest of inspiration or material for prayer. Would it be outrageous to look forward to the day when both missal and breviary might be familiar to such of the laity as are drawn to them? I think not, and I think that there are already signs pointing in that direction. Catholic publishers, like others, depend on existing markets for the disposal of their goods; it appears that some of them are already reading those signs and interpreting them in the sense of the expectation I have just indicated.⁴

Before discussing these signs, it may be well to fish a little in the troubled waters that fringe our real problem. There are regions of controversy, and sometimes of heated feelings, where unproved assumptions abound. Unless something is done to get rid of them any discussion of a popular breviary is likely to be bedevilled from the outset and its conclusions nullified.

Much as I desire to 'fulfil my obligation' in reciting Divine Office, I cannot help regarding the 'obligation' as something of a bogey in our present discussion. The available casuistry has strict reference to certain ecclesiastical laws binding certain groups, 'under sin', to a daily recitation of the breviary, to do so (with exceptions) *vocally*. This discipline has grown up gradually; the Church has often modified it and can do so still. Useful as it might be, as a guide or an analogy, to a layman, it has no direct reference to him, and from its standpoint he remains one who has 'no obligation', i.e. none of *this sort*. But any discussion of the part a layman might have in Divine Office, apart from passive assistance, or lending it his support through benefactions, which takes no account of any *other* source of obligation is foredoomed to sterility. There is another, anterior, obligation (or *necessity*) arising from human nature, from the essential pattern of the Church, from the double aspect of religion as a social as well as an individual bond between God and his creatures. The hierarchical organization of worship and the necessary division of

4 I do not mean a *proximate* expectation, nor one that is likely to come about without controversy and opposition. In this context it is worth while noting that the Secular Institutes, so marked a feature of the time, so prolific since the war, and usually so closely allied to what is up-to-date (even 'advanced') in liturgical practice, do not by any means universally assume any greater use of the breviary for their members even when living the common life. Indeed some have adopted the attitude that the Office is so much the part of clerics and religious that 'secular' Christians have no time or aptitude for it. Amongst the petty ironies of history is surely the fact that one such Institute bears the anomalous title of 'Opus Dei'!

labour in paying this debt do not replace this basic necessity, but simply reinforce it. The necessity itself flows from the natural law and is amply reinforced by divine positive law; the layman's active share in public cult can and should be discussed in reference to this, quite independently of any further ecclesiastical dispositions. I need hardly bother to interpolate at this point that by public worship I mean something quite different from the mere adding together of the individual prayers of Christians, and something immeasurably more than the mere *physical* publicity which results from even two persons praying together. It is a *sort* of worship made in the name of and with the authority of the whole Church as a moral personality; it retains that character however *privately* performed. What has an 'ordinary' Christian to do with that, and not with the regulations and bye-laws made for particular groups?

The principle of *delegation* observed by the Church in the organisation of her prayer needs no justification. But like 'obligation' it needs to be properly understood. It does not intend to set up any sort of monopoly, nor can it do so. Naturally, amongst those specially deputed to lead and sustain the ecclesiastical prayer, some will be moved to do so with greater solemnity and outward splendour, or to give more attention to the highest artistic standards; then they will deserve admiration and support from everyone, and up to a point, imitation, but also, in certain circumstances some measure of deliberate *non-imitation*. But their monopoly is superficial, affecting only a modality of the worship and not the '*opus Dei*' itself. Neither Benedictines, nor Dominicans, nor Canons Regular, nor any other group, clerical, religious or secular, can possess, and by implication exclude, others from the inalienable heritage of every baptized member of the Church. The only real problem is the extent to which each will choose to exercise the functions that result from his birthright. There was a period in which there grew up a too narrowly functional and static notion of the sphere of activity for diverse groups within the Church; e.g. it was the knight's part to defend the faith, the peasant's to till the soil, the priest's and canon's to sanctify souls, the monk's to pursue the ascetic path and restrict his apostolate to the austere and aloof one of contemplation and vicarious suffering. It seems odd that now, having travelled so far from a framework of society envisaged in that way, some of us should

still conserve cognate attitudes regarding the Liturgy.

In these days, so conscious of the social aspect of the Church, and of 'community' in general, it may be necessary to forestall another objection occasionally to be met with. A potent factor in the building of any group is a cultivation of its awareness of its own unity. This is being continually re-discovered by community-builders, and as often as not, they discover at the same time the essential part played by a rhythm of *common* prayer quite distinct from that of the individual members. Some of them may feel that if you are not actually building up some group in the Church, an order, congregation, institute, or society, insistence upon this element of common prayer is unavailing or inappropriate. I believe that such a view is refutable on the following grounds. No community can be built within the Church except upon a basis of the community already existing there—the essential Church-unity that Christ prayed, and died for, and so, put into his Church. A group cultivating a sense of its own unity apart from this, or even without due attention to it, sets out on a pathway of self-delusion. It seems obvious that the reality of Church unity, and the sense of it, must be available to all, whether they reach it through membership in some subordinate group or in other ways. The pronouncedly liturgical character of countless hermit saints, to say nothing of so many solitary layfolk, in all ages, is evidence for this. Ideally speaking, no doubt, psalmody is *choral* and the Office a *co-operative* chant, but this does not necessarily imply alternate *noises* from *wooden choir-stalls*. The spiritual choir of the Church is co-terminous with the whole Church; parts of it, alas, remain as inaudible as the untouched harp. Yet, happily, each string, while unbroken, can be called back into the consort.

I suppose that no one would wish to deny that there are many valid *a priori* inducements urging the laity to take more interest in the breviary, but like so many theoretically unexceptionable statements they seem to 'cut very little ice' in practice. For example, the breviary is, amongst other things, a select anthology from the inspired Word of God, providing a good, if not perfect, methodical scheme for the annual reading of the Bible. Better still, it is solidly built upon an armature of psalmody, and involves the weekly reading of the Psalter, that inspired prayer-book so often used by our Saviour himself, the Blessed Virgin and the

Apostles, and countless Christians from the earliest ages of the Church to our own day. There can be nothing odd about a contemporary Christian, not otherwise incapable of profiting thereby, being drawn towards this source. It might even be taken for granted, in an age marked by an enlightened liturgico-pastoral impulse visibly re-enlivening the whole devotional life of the Church, that there should occur something like a 'movement' in that direction.

It is important, however, to realize that some characteristic advantages of our age, such as widespread literacy and ease of communications, do not necessarily favour such a movement. Universal ability to read print does not necessarily involve a more widespread desire to read Holy Scripture, or the better literature in any field. The democratization of culture is leading, even amongst educated Catholics, to an increasing unfamiliarity with Latin, and in some quarters even to the building up of an anti-Latin bias. These are real obstacles, though not so insurmountable as sometimes assumed. There remains a further and more profound difficulty to be recognized and overcome. When we moderns attempt to psalmodize, either with the 'Old' or 'New' Latin Psalter, or the original Hebrew, or, for that matter, in any vernacular version which does or might exist, we are speaking 'in an alien tongue' in a sense far more serious than the mere linguistic one. We are divided from the Psalmist by the centuries, and more than one cultural revolution, in conditions of life very different from those in which the psalms were spontaneously produced. Furthermore, many current concepts of prayer seem different from and even contradictory to the typical procedure of the Psalmists. Unless the two approaches can be harmonized, one runs the risk of making a dangerous division in what ought to be the supremely unifying force of our lives.⁵

Genuine as these, and other, difficulties may be, to one who might wish to popularize the breviary, I do not think they amount to the defeatist solution of abandoning so great a part of our Christian patrimony of prayer. This would surely be unsafe,

⁵ Consider the typical psalmic pattern of the *Benedicite* at festal Lauds with its piling of imagery; the singer calls on a whole procession of creatures to join him in praise of God. This is no prayer of 'distractions' but, if we can rely on the assertions of so many saints, the royal road to contemplation. Incidentally, the same procedure still seemed natural and congenial to St Francis of Assisi in his *Cantico del Frate Sole* and to Dante in his celebrated pageant of the church in *Purg.* xxxii ff., and indeed throughout the whole of his poem.

even if one had some adequate substitute to offer, which we have not. The real lesson to learn here is, perhaps, that the debate should not be conducted on *doctrinaire* grounds, however sure we may be of our theological premises, but upon the collection and interpretation of facts in the living Church. 'Field-work', the application of statistical methods, possibly, a discreet use of questionnaires, and similar techniques familiar in other realms of study, would seem to be indicated for this purpose. Some may be shocked at this suggestion, but I am convinced that the method is suitable, and the only way to dispel some of our almost innate prejudices on the subject. The way has been indicated to us already, e.g. by the American, Verner Moore,⁶ and with particular reference to the Divine Office by the French Dominicans.⁷ I cannot claim to have advanced their findings, but I have had an opportunity to imitate them on a small and tentative scale, yet enough to surprise me and reform many of my own cherished assumptions, and to leave me convinced that this is a fruitful field for other more competent and resolute investigators.

Are there in fact numbers of ordinary Catholic lay people who desire to use the breviary, in spite of knowing all about the difficulties we have mentioned, from their own experience? If so, are these numbers considerable, and are they growing? If so, what is the significance? My connection with a small group of such people during the past four or five years inclines me to an affirmative answer in every instance.⁸

In an organization so large, so various, so ancient as the Catholic Church, the existence of some such people can be presumed. But the actual numbers cannot be wholly accounted for by the sort of assumptions which most readily occur to the mind. First, that they would consist largely of the leisured, who are free to follow a natural liturgical bent, or some historical or aesthetic attraction towards the liturgy. Secondly, that many of them will be disappointed or chequered religious vocations, in whom a kind of nostalgia for the choir has survived the possibility of actually occupying a stall. Thirdly, that their ranks would be

⁶ Now Dom Pablo Maria, Carthusian. As head of the Department of Psychology and Psychiatry and Director of the Child Guidance Centre at the Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., he is well known as the author of a number of books on psychology and mental hygiene. The work I had particularly in mind here was his 'clinical' treatment of the spiritual life in *The Life of Man with God*, New York 1956.

⁷ *Laudate Dominum*, special number of *La Vie Spirituelle*, 19.

⁸ *The Perseverantes Handbook*, Colchester 1956.

swelled by converts, e.g. from Anglicanism or Jewry, disconcerted to find, on entering the true Church, that their long habit of using the psalms in both public and private worship must now be severely curtailed, sometimes under the threat of being eyed askance as not quite in tune with a modern Catholic outlook. Lastly, we must face the fact that the liturgical movement (but in fairness one must add the *non*-liturgical, or any other kind) will infallibly attract spiritual 'cranks'.

My restricted experience with people actually using or wishing to use the breviary forces me to acknowledge all these things as operative factors which may not safely be left out of account, but also that none of them singly, nor all of them together, may be assigned as the total cause of the movement which can already be discerned in an inchoate form. As far as the group in question is concerned the 'leisured' have been conspicuously absent from the start; all its members are busy people, many of them busy in just the ways and just the degree that liberal moralists unhesitatingly admit as lawful reasons for exemption from the strict canonical obligation. Every kind of status, profession, trade, and social grade is represented, so that the roll of membership is a fair 'sampling' of the modern world of work and responsibility. A minority is independently pledged to a use of the Office, as tertiaries, oblates, members of a secular institute, and of course, there is a sprinkling, but only a sprinkling, of ex-religious. These form an 'instructed nucleus' to enlighten and consolidate the rest. But even these, or I might say especially these, are encouraged at finding so many like-minded people whose attraction to the Office is not motivated by any ecclesiastical obligation, however tenuous, but merely by their sense of community and corporate worship. The 'others' are equally encouraged at their reception into a group which understands and sympathizes with them, neither tries to re-direct them into less congenial channels, nor snubs them as rather peculiar, or even as guilty of pharisaical self-regard. Adult converts, some of whom are a trifle ill at ease about the 'non-conformist' features of some contemporary Catholic worship, or shocked that so many papal pronouncements seem a dead letter, are of course included. Yet they by no means swamp the 'cradle Catholics' and those with a modern Catholic schooling. And, what of the 'cranks'? I shall only say that a Church which is Catholic has no more power to exclude

the crank than to exclude the sinner, only to reform him. The objection to the crank in a free society is that he is a disruptive force; so far, the group I have in mind has managed to absorb its small quota of oddities without disintegration.

This is a small amount of fact, you may argue, and a very desultory and casual interpretation of it. But I find it impressive enough to feel that the investigation is worth pursuing further and with greater exactness. I am prepared to admit that a hard-working priest in the mission-field might be excused for dismissing the matter as not immediately relevant to his work. He may, and must, be cautious if he meets such people. Nevertheless, I believe that we have already passed the stage where their occurrence amongst 'ordinary parishioners' can be completely disregarded in the field of practical soul-saving. The liturgical movement is to be supported in its true essence, though not in its vagaries; this incipient hankering of the layman for the breviary, or at least for the psalms, may not be safely stigmatized today as one of the vagaries.

Amongst the many interested enquirers concerning the group I have referred to, some eighty per cent were of the sort for whom it was primarily envisaged, i.e. those who already used the breviary, in many cases for some years, and sought entry to the group simply to combat their frustrated feeling of isolation. The remainder were attracted for a variety of reasons, and usually sought information and help, even in procuring breviaries. (This was probably the most serious practical problem of all.) Of this twenty per cent only a few were completely ignorant of the Office; only a negligible few expressed any sort of puzzlement that the Office should even be suggested to a layman. One could not help noting the widespread consciousness of the spiritual needs of the laity, backed up by an admirable degree of zeal and generosity. The problem therefore presented itself in an urgent form; here were people who must be directed towards, or away from, the breviary, here and now. One could scarcely afford to temporize. They had to be put into a position where, with an appreciation of what the Office is and could be for an ordinary lay Christian, and a full knowledge of the obstacles in their way, they might then make a deliberate choice between making some use of the breviary or turning away from it and adopting some alternative.

The manner in which the problem presented itself dictated the procedure adopted. The more proficient were at once invited to name some part of the Office (a single Hour was regarded as the normal minimum) which they would undertake to recite daily whenever circumstances permitted. They might use any form or version of breviary approved by the Church, and they were encouraged to be liberal-minded about substituting another Hour for the chosen one whenever it seemed more suitable or they felt like it. This point was all the more important since a good deal of emphasis was laid on the suitability of reciting the Hours at the 'proper' time; in the absence of any moral obligation to recite at all they could afford to pay all the more attention to this and to avoid too great a use of anticipation, deferment, and 'blocage'. Almost from the outset one could think in terms of a widespread network of 'stalls' forming a spiritual choir. From the geographical point of view this soon became impressive: the response came from nearly all parts of the English-speaking world, though not confined to it; versions of the Handbook have been issued in Spanish and Flemish, and arrangements for French and German versions are under discussion. The results were impressive, too, because of the ease with which the whole *cursum* of the Office was covered by the members. Naturally, a majority opted for the crucial Hours of Lauds or Vespers, and/or Prime and Compline, but the other Hours were accounted for, sometimes in unexpected ways. For example, Matins was taken care of by a travelling salesman in the U.S.A., otherwise destined for insomnia in wayside Motels, and also, quite appropriately, in this country, by a night-watchman, who took the trouble to learn Latin, and also enough Gregorian to *sing* the psalms of the nocturns whilst the rest of us are asleep! Even the ancient ideal of the Ascemetes would appear not to be beyond the scope of modern, workaday Christians.

For the others, simple instruction was given about the shape of the Office, how to recite the psalms, to get breviaries or substitutes for them, how to prepare for the undertaking of a full member. During a probationary period, weekly rather than daily recitation of an Hour was accepted, with a daily 'token', entailing at first no more than a verse or two or a prayer. For these, and indeed for all, a serious effort was made to interpret the 'promise' or 'undertaking' in terms other than those in reference to the

ecclesiastical obligation.

The incidence of backsliding in this, as in all matters of *intention* and the *interior life*, is not easy to assess even if it were desirable; in any case, I do not think it of great importance in comparison with what this small-scale experiment has taught those who are taking part in it.

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I am still prepared for some to argue that after all the idea of the breviary as a layman's, as well as a priest's, prayer-book remains a debatable and academic point. But I assume that all will be ready to grant that behind such a debate there are deeper problems about which we need be in no disagreement.

First, our Catholic laity, in so far as they are prepared for it (and some are), should have more *psalmody* (one way or another) as a main ingredient of their life of prayer. It is not cranky to look forward to a day when the Psalter may once again be the treasured companion of the layman, though not, of course, his only source of prayer.

Secondly, it is reasonable to think of enriching the religious culture of the laity with an ever greater knowledge and love of the rest of the Bible, *and* something of the Church Fathers, *and* something of the annals of Christian sanctity, and that not just as culture but as equipment for prayer. The breviary is one instrument for doing this, admittedly not yet perfected for the purpose. What are the practicable alternatives available to us now?

Thirdly, laity, clergy and religious alike, must in any case, learn more profoundly that a life of prayer demands a lifelong, balanced, and interdependent share in both liturgical and individual prayer. Further, these two halves or aspects of prayer should as far as possible derive from the same source, and proceed by analogous methods.

Finally, setting aside all question of breviary or even of the Psalter itself, must not all Christians learn to re-create for themselves *out of* (not diverting from) the normal, compulsory activities of their lives, a *liturgical rhythm*, which would at least involve them in an orderly, formal, and multiple consecration of each appreciable time-unit in life—each year, season, week, day and hour? Such a consecration, to be effective, implies a more or less formal approach to Almighty God, on the part of every Christian, in his dual character of member of the Mystical Body

and redeemed individual soul. If so, shall we make use of the tools and materials we have got, striving ever to improve them, or shall we first jettison them and then think of making bricks, possibly without straw?



THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

DAPHNE POCHIN MOULD

THE Mass, and the beauty of the Liturgy of the Mass, was one of the forces which overcame my struggles against the grace of God, and pulled me into the Church. And I could not get to know the Liturgy of the Mass without wanting to know more about the Church's official daily prayer, the jewelled setting of the daily sacrifice, the Divine Office. So, as a convert, newly received, I began to find out more about the Office and attend its choral recitation as and when I could. Then came my reception into the Dominican Third Order and the obligation to say our Lady's Hours, which, simpler and almost unvarying, are yet built on the same plan as the longer Office and provide an ideal guide and introduction to it. Later still came the possession of a Dominican breviary, the first tentative attempts at saying the Office on the bigger feasts, and eventually the time when I found that it was not whether I would or would not say the Divine Office daily, but simply that I could not bring myself to leaving off so doing.

And as a footnote to this personal account of the praying of the Divine Office, I should perhaps say that I always said our Lady's Hours in Latin, as I now say the Divine Office. I have only the sort of knowledge of Latin a science graduate might be expected to have remembered, but it is enough to rub along on, to sense the glittering beauty of the Latin phrases, and feel the unifying influence of a supranational tongue, linking all nations, all ages. It does not matter if I miss the sense of a word here and there, the thread remains unbroken, the mind is intent on God rather than on minor problems of translation or interpretation.

The first thing to realize about the Divine Office is that it is the communal prayer of the whole Church, of the Mystical Body

praying in and through our Lord, *per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*. Moreover, the whole Office is conceived in terms of a community at prayer; its psalms and hymns and responsories are meant for singing in choir, and for that reason I think it is important that one should, at least at the beginning, have opportunity to join in this choral singing or saying of the Office. Even without a book and very little knowledge of what was going on, the chanted Matins and Lauds of Christmas, or even said Vespers, left me with the sense of standing under a waterfall of prayer, caught up in something that reached out into eternity, into the choirs of heaven. Later on, when the friars were singing Compline one evening when there was exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, I saw this even more clearly, a figure of the blessed in heaven before the face of God. And sometimes, saying the Office alone one is in some way aware of not being alone, of joining in the prayers and praises of the whole Mystical Body.

If you follow the Liturgy of the Mass day by day, you are caught up into the liturgical year, into its moods, its dramatizations, its showing forth of Truth. Built round the Mass, the Office adds to and expands these themes and ideas; the weeks of Advent bring one closer to the mystery of the Incarnation; the Resurrection becomes more real to the mind under the teaching of the Easter Liturgy. The short commentary from one of the Fathers on the day's Gospel, read at Matins, helps one to understand its meaning, but it did more than that for me; it brought me to reading the Fathers. Agnostic, I had always believed that the Fathers of the Church were out-dated, with nothing to say to the twentieth century. The lessons at Matins were enough to show me that error, and to make me want to read more and more of them.

Then, very often, the lessons at Matins also include short extracts from the Old Testament, again enough to whet the appetite and send one back to the complete text. The series taken from the Minor Prophets in the month of November at once made me go back to the Bible for what happened next, and to find out more about the various writers. Again, the biographical second Nocturn lessons on the saints' days, whilst they are notoriously panegyric and traditional rather than critical historical accounts of each saint, do have a very definite and formative value. For they are tradition, and tradition is not to be despised,

they do hold up to us what Catholic tradition means by sanctity. The stress, in these comfort-loving days, on the penitential achievements of the saints is a continual reminder of the need for the cross in our own lives, and a spur to maintain and increase our personal penitential practices. 'Prayer cannot be accompanied by self-indulgence', wrote St Teresa of Avila (*Way of Perfection*) and the second Nocturn lessons are almost daily reminders of this basic fact of Catholic living.

Against the background of the psalms, the Church sets not only lessons and prayers, but antiphons and responsories with key themes, ideas for the different liturgical seasons. More than that, the way she selects psalms, extracts, passages from Scripture, provides a guide to the Bible itself. For the Church picks out happenings from the Old Testament which foreshadow the New and sets the two passages alongside each other; she points out the mystical meanings hidden under the literal text, the burning bush, the symbol of Mary's perpetual virginity, for example. Saying the Office not only helps to penetrate under the literal skin of Scripture; it makes one read the Bible through the eyes of the Church as it were.

The modern, non-Catholic, attitude to the psalms is that they are poetry of long ago and far away, unreal for today. Yet praying them daily discovers their timelessness. According to one's mood and circumstances, different verses become vital and real each day. Then too the poet's telling of God's dealings with the Chosen People in the distant past appears not as past history but as a symbol of his dealings with us now, and of the ways in which we respond or rebel.

Naturally enough, according to the period when they were composed and by whom, the quality of the Office varies on the different feast days. One cannot help a certain amount of literary criticism in one's prayers, or feeling that the text of the Office on certain days could stand a good deal of improvement! But those days are rare. Normally, the Office rises to the heights, and in so doing, provides a corrective, a rule of doctrine and prayer, to more sentimental 'popular devotions'. As against what appears to me as the often too human and too sentimental approach of the Stations of the Cross, I would like to set the gleaming brilliance of the Office for the Finding of the Holy Cross and Exaltation of the Holy Cross. For here the fundamental Christian

concept of the victory of Christ, of the glory of the cross, is set forth—aspects we could forget if we stress overmuch the human sufferings of our Lord. Right of course to recall and meditate on them, but we must see the whole picture, salute the holy cross, salute the victorious Crucified, salute the triumph of the King of the angels. For the Crucifixion is not only suffering, it is our Redemption, victory and triumph over the powers of evil, over death and darkness.

So too in these materially-minded days it is easy almost to forget all about the angels. We know they exist, but know it remotely; they form no vital part of our spiritual consciousness. But the Divine Office for the feasts of the angels is an immediate corrective; the splendour of angelic being shines in its inspired phrases and texts; it almost brings a vision of the angel hosts and makes us realize their place in the scheme of creation, their relation to God and to ourselves, their power to help us.

The Office is the prayer of the whole Church, of the Mystical Body; it must therefore help us forward in understanding the reality and the meaning of the Communion of Saints. It may do that very vividly; as when I said the Office for the Feast of all the Dominican Saints (November 12th) for the first time and it brought me of a sudden a kind of vision of the whole Order, of its saints in heaven and our community with them. Again, I have mentioned the extracts from the Fathers in the lessons at Matins; I would add how much the choice of passages from St Thomas Aquinas and St Albert, for instance, on their feast days,¹ helps one forward in getting to know these saints; the stimulating and refreshing effect of close-coupling prayer to them with reading some of the saints' own writing.

The Office is Scripture and doctrine prayed, it provides an endless source of subjects for further meditation, prayer and study, and because it does, it leads one on along the road to contemplation. Off and on, I would be aware of this, the words which had seemed dry and meaningless coming alive of a sudden as a hazel rod twists in a diviner's hands, and one's vision shifting out to God, to the saints, our Lady, the bright hosts of heaven. There are, of course, times when it is hard to say, and one wonders whether all has to be gone through today, tomorrow and again

¹ St Albert—November 15; St Thomas—feast of his patronage of Catholic schools, November 13.

the next day. But it is essential to stick to one's guns on these occasions and go on by an act of the will. Again, it does seem that the Office can provide a perfect counterpoise to the stress and turmoil of contemporary life. I do not think that the problem of finding time for it really looms as large as we would like to think; we find time for all our amusements, nor is there any real reason why, in case of need, we should not get up a trifle earlier in the morning. But it is important, I think, to do more than make time for saying the Office; one should try to relax while saying it, let go the stresses of the day, and drop quietly into the silent pool of contemplation, relax our straining efforts and let the Church's prayer carry us along.

For me, the Divine Office is a very easy way to pray. For the text is provided, a text of cool beauty making no impossible emotional demands as do prayer books of 'popular' piety, and the mind can either concentrate on the words, or the themes presented, or on God himself. The Rosary, where the basic meditation has to be constructed each time afresh by oneself, seems to be a much more difficult prayer. That more and more lay people are coming to love and use the Divine Office, or shortened versions of it, as their staple prayer, seems to me a very healthy sign in modern Catholic life. We can do nothing without prayer, and what better prayer than that of the whole Mystical Body of Christ? Yet much more needs to be done to help people to get to know and say the Office, and give them opportunities of being present at its recitation in choir, in which last matter I admit to having been rather exceptionally fortunate. Often, too, I wish that something further would be done to 'skim the cream' off the Divine Office (drawing on the special beauties of its variants, Roman, Dominican, Carmelite, and so on) and make them available in the vernacular for those with little time and less Latin. We all of us need to pray more and better, and for very many liturgical prayer is the easiest road. Again, I myself find that the simplest way to pray for the dead is to say the Office of the Dead.

The Divine Office is prayer, instruction, the life-bringing stream of the inspired word. It is the prayer of the Mystical Body addressing God through her Head and Lord; it cuts across national and temporal barriers, and once again the vision stands. 'I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and

tribes, and peoples, and tongues: standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures: and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God, saying: Amen: benediction, and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever.²

² Apoc. vii, 9.



THE WORD OF GOD INCARNATE¹

H. J. RICHARDS

ANY treatment of the Incarnation would obviously have to give some consideration to the two heresies which have distorted the truth contained in this mystery. At one extreme lies Arianism, which wanted to treat Christ as if he was exclusively human, with the divine about him no more than superimposed by a sort of adoption. At the other extreme is Docetism, which wanted to treat Christ as if he was exclusively divine, with the human about him only a sort of optical illusion. Both are heresies. The truth lies between the two extremes. Christ is the Word of God incarnate, one person in two complete natures, divine and human.

For an article appearing in a number devoted to BIBLE AND WORSHIP, this excursion into speculative theology will appear less enigmatic if it is realized that Christ was not the first time that the Word of God had become flesh. A sort of incarnation had taken place for over a thousand years beforehand, when the Word of God slowly took shape in the books which we accept as the Bible. And you can be as wrong about the Bible as you can about Christ. You can imagine that it is an exclusively human book which has been subsequently approved of and adopted by God—in which case I will call you a Biblical Arian. Or you can imagine that it is an exclusively divine work, with the various

¹ Reprinted with kind permission from *Scripture*, April 1958.

human authors acting merely as God's dictaphones—in which case I will call you a Biblical Docetist. The truth lies between the two extremes. The Bible is the Word of God incarnate, completely divine and completely human.

Which of those two errors are we most in danger of falling into? Fifty years ago it would almost certainly have been the first. Anyone living in any sort of intellectual atmosphere would be an incipient Arian. He would be terribly excited about the amount of light that was being thrown on the Bible by the new discoveries in the field of archeology, geology, anthropology, ethnology, psychology and the rest. For the first time, perhaps, he would be seeing the Bible in its full human context, seeing it as a thoroughly human book, subject apparently, like any other human book, to every human limitation. And he would be tempted to come to the conclusion, like so many others were doing, that all this nonsense about the Word of God had been exploded by Science.

That danger does not exist any longer today, at any rate not for Catholics. The Church has condemned that conclusion, and reasserted in even stronger terms the divine nature of the Bible. As faithful children we naturally accept the Church's decision. Our real danger lies in imagining that that is the end of the matter. Evelyn Waugh put across the point to perfection when he described the eager convert in *Brideshead Revisited*, who was asked how many persons there were in the Trinity and replied: 'However many you say, Father.' As far as he was concerned, if the Pope said it was going to rain, then it would. And if in fact it turned out a fine day, then, as he puts it, it would be 'sort of raining spiritually, only we were too sinful to see it'. Our real danger lies in accepting our dogmas not only unquestioningly (as we should) but unintelligently. If, in spite of all the discoveries made at the beginning of the century, the Church insists that the Bible is the Word of God, she is not asking us to stop thinking. She is inviting us to think harder still. The discoveries have not thereby ceased to exist, and the human nature of the Bible is still there whether we like it or not. The Church's ban on Arianism is not a permission to lapse into a sort of Docetism.

In fact, we did not really need the scientific approach to the Bible to teach us that it was written by men and not by automatons. We knew beforehand, without being told, that the

various books of which it is made up reflect the whole range of the human temperament, from the bleak pessimism of Ecclesiastes to the self-satisfaction of Ecclesiasticus, from the pedantic clumsiness of the author of Paralipomena to the effortless poetry of some of the psalms, from the fire and passion of St Paul to the peaceful calm of St John. St Paul dictated his highly complicated thought at top speed, and the fact that the result is inspired does not stop it being highly complicated. The author of the second book of Maccabees, on the other hand, found writing a laborious and painful business, and his inspiration did not prevent him from concluding his work with 'That is the best I could do'. The human personalities stand out, and anyone who opens the book to read it can discover it for himself. What we needed the scientific approach for was to show us that this human nature of the book is not merely a question of style and personality. It goes much deeper, to affect the whole background of these authors, their whole mentality, their whole outlook. What we needed the scientific approach for was to show us that this book is so thoroughly human that from the first page to the last every possible human allowance has to be made if we are to understand it.

Some examples may put the point more clearly. These authors *thought* like men of their time. If all men of the time conceived of the earth as the centre of the universe, a flat disc covered with a sort of colander through which the rain came down, then your biblical author is going to think and express himself in that way too. It was impossible, outside of a miracle, for him to conceive of it in any other way, and it would be pointless to demand that he should.

These authors *wrote* like men of their time. It was the custom of the time to compose the history of your tribe or your people or your nation by simply stringing together all the various records and traditions you could lay your hands on (whether they agreed with each other or not), and leaving it to the reader to make his choice between the inconsistent details, then your biblical author is going to do the same. To read his work as if it were history in our sense of the word would be to make nonsense of it.²

² An evening paper recently advertised a series of articles under the title of (one might have expected it) 'The Bible is True'. It promised to devote one of its contributions exclusively to showing that Goliath *was* a giant; new discoveries had made it possible to tell within half an inch how tall he was. It is difficult to conceive what such discoveries

The *approach* of these authors was the approach of a particular civilization and mentality. When a Westerner is presented with a story (Eden, the Tower of Babel, the Flood), his very first question is almost certain to be, 'Did it really happen?' The Semite, when he is told a story, asks, 'What does it mean?' The biblical authors are Semites (and that is true even of the New Testament writers). They are going to write with the firm conviction that the significance of a story is the most important (not to say the most interesting) thing about it. Not that they are going to invent facts or deliberately falsify the facts at their disposal; but their eye is always going to be on the theological meaning of the traditions with which they are dealing, and they will not be half so concerned as we are over their historical accuracy.

These examples, and a thousand others that one could pick, are generally put under the heading of *literary form*. Some scholars have given the unfortunate impression that the existence of different literary forms was a new discovery. We are, of course, using them constantly without even advertg to the fact. The speaker on a platform does not have to inquire into the genealogy and social status of every member of his audience before he allows himself to address them as 'Ladies and Gentlemen'. It is the accepted literary form for that sort of occasion. Even the business man who is guilty of the sharpest practice is addressed not as 'Offspring of Satan' but as 'Dear Sir'. It is the accepted literary form. It is difficult to conceive of anyone in this century obtuse enough to misunderstand these words. It is, however, possible to envisage such a letter being dug up in two thousand years' time, and the conclusion drawn that the person to whom the letter was addressed was an intimate friend of the writer (and even possibly a member of the peerage). The same words mean different things in different contexts. When a thing is taken out of its context it tends to make nonsense.

All this is very obvious when it is pointed out; but when we read the Bible, we treat it so uniformly as the Word of God,

might be, but even the discovery of a document describing the colour of his boots could not hide the fact that Goliath is a very secondary detail inside one account of David's rise to fame, and that there is a second account which does not even mention him. There is even a third record at the end of David's story which puts down Goliath's death to one of David's generals. The biblical author could hardly have made it clearer that the reader must make his own judgment about the Goliath story (and if necessary about his height).

it is printed so uniformly in the same print, that we forget to make allowance for the fact that it is a whole library, containing prose and verse, history and legend, legislation and prayer, national epics and private diaries, and a whole host of other literary forms for which no equivalent exists in our own literatures. Each of these must be recognized for what it is, and judged according to the rules for that form. Otherwise we will only understand the meaning of the words, not the meaning of the man who wrote them. What we needed the scientific approach for was to put us back into the full context of the men who wrote these books, and to show us that whether or not this is the Word of God transcending time and place, it is first of all a thoroughly human book, so rooted in time and place that it is unintelligible without reference to it.

Anyone who has learnt to see the Bible in this way will no longer be shocked by the men and women it portrays. We tend to think of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the abstract, as a series of noble and edifying personages, walking across the stage of history with the dignity of stained-glass figures. We open the Bible to find that they were rather primitive bedouins, with moral standards that were lamentably low, if not offensive to pious ears. Anyone who feels that, wants to do a lot more Bible-reading than he does. He needs to make the Bible his constant examination of conscience to see whether his ears are not perhaps too pious, to ask himself whether he has not become rather more fastidious than the God who came down to the level of men like this, the God who was not afraid to walk with them in order to draw them to himself. When the Bible speaks of man, it speaks of him as he is, not as we would like to think him to be.

It speaks of people like Adam, whose first thought on being found out was to find an excuse and put the blame on someone else; people like Jacob, who decided that the ambition he had set his heart on was more important than the question of whether he told a few lies or not; people like Moses, who pleaded his lack of training in order to try and escape the responsibility put on him; people like Jephtah, who in the enthusiasm of the moment made a vow to God and then had to break his heart to be faithful to it; people like Samson, with his roving eye and fickle heart; people like Ruth, who showed such unusual devotion to her mother-in-law that a book had to be written about it; people like Saul,

who found it easy to fight God's battle but difficult to obey God's instructions; people like David, who one moment could dance like a child in the happiness of his intimacy with God, and the next fall from grace as miserably as anyone else; people like the Levite in the parable, who looked the other way after the accident on the Jericho road because he did not want to get mixed up in anything; people like Simon Peter, who had so much faith that he jumped into the sea and so little faith that he went under, who was willing to defend his master with a sword and then broke down under the questions of a serving maid . . . people in fact like ourselves. Because when all is said and done, this book is about us. Not about the comings and goings of some primitive Middle Eastern tribe, but about us, about our aspirations and falls, about our joys and our misery, about the beauty of our calling and our failure to be worthy of it. Here is man as he is, as we know him to be, in all his weakness. And here is God as he is, not an abstract Prime Mover or First Cause, but a God who is interested in men of flesh and blood, a father who bends down to appeal to his wayward children. If we had had the job of inspiring this book, of laying out a blueprint of the sort of thing that God's Word should speak to us, what a strange mixture we should have turned out of speculative theology and hot-house piety. And how very inhuman we would have made it.

The Bible is utterly human. From beginning to end, from the men who wrote it to the men about whom they wrote, from the crossing of the first *t* to the dotting of the last *i*, this book is human through and through. The first thing it asks of us is to accept it at that human level. There are people who are shocked at such a suggestion, who think that such an approach is disrespectful to the divine nature of this book. They might as easily be shocked by the human nature of Christ. This is the flesh in which the Word of God has become incarnate. It is in this humble form that God has revealed his Word. There is no point in saying that we are only interested in what God has to say. We cannot begin to hear what he has to say until we have tuned into the human wavelength on which he has spoken.

THE PSALMS AND EVERYDAY LIFE¹

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

IN spite of the title of this talk, I do not propose to say anything about everyday life. It is not merely that I can think of very little of value to say about it; above all I want to avoid absolutely the idea that we should adapt the psalms to our own lives. The psalms are not adaptable. They are a divinely inspired, divinely guaranteed expression of a whole range of religious sentiments which we must take as we find them, take as God left them, however crude or alien to our native ways of thought they may sometimes seem. Our thought in using the psalms for our devotions should be to take them simply as they are, and let them enrich and invigorate our everyday religion. We must try to adapt ourselves to the psalms, not the psalms to ourselves. So I shall confine myself to a few considerations about what the psalms are.

To begin with then, they are *songs*, they are meant to be sung. And they have all the variety of songs anywhere in the world. Some are sad songs, some cheerful, some plaintive, some robust. There are quiet songs among them and noisy songs, 'rock 'n' roll' songs, and also, I am afraid, boring songs. They are very human, and God is no more a respecter of artistic values than he is of persons. Furthermore, they are songs meant to be sung to an accompaniment. That is what the word 'psalm' means: from the Greek verb *psallo*, which means to strum or twang, and then to sing and twang, or hum and strum, at the same time. Some of the more rollicking psalms were sung to a very noisy accompaniment indeed; for example, Psalm 150, 'Praise the Lord among his saints, praise him on the blaring trumpet, praise him on the fiddle and guitar, praise him with drumming and dancing, praise him on wind and strings, praise him on echoing cymbals, praise him on merry-making cymbals'.

Forgive me for having used what you might feel are rather vulgar or irreverent epithets about the psalms, but I think that quotation will justify me. The Hebrew name for the psalms is *Tehillim*, 'Praises', and praising God to the Hebrew meant making

a loud noise. The psalms are all religious songs, most of them liturgical songs to be used in formal worship, but there is nothing whatever about them of dim religious light or subdued ecclesiastical demeanour.

Their liturgical character is suggested—apart, of course, from the evidence of their own texts—by their traditional ascription to David. It has never been supposed, as far as I know, that David wrote all the psalms, though there is no very valid reason for doubting that he composed a few of them. But David was the patron saint, indeed the founder, of the Temple liturgy, and so all the psalms used in that liturgy, at whatever date during the many centuries of its development they were composed, and the other psalms that accrued to this liturgical compilation, were given what you could call a titular Davidic authorship by way of assuring them their place in the tradition of worship that David had founded.

To appreciate these sacred songs rightly, we must see them in their setting—or I should say their settings; because besides their immediate, or Old Testament setting, which is their plain literary context, they have, as inspired writing, a further theological context, which I will call their total or Christian setting.

First of all, then, some remarks about their Old Testament setting, and to begin with about their language. There will be not a few passages of the psalter which are completely unintelligible at the first reading, and some which remain unintelligible after never so many readings. Where the obscurity is due to corruptions of the text there is little we can do about it. But more often it is due to what strikes the European mind as incoherence of expression, to the want of any obvious sequence of thought, to the reduction of almost all conjunctions to a universal 'and', to uncouth Semitic metaphors and idioms. It will be a help here to use a modern edition which sets out the psalms in strophes, and provides some notes on the text—for example Fr Lattey's translation in the Westminster version, or for those who can read French the Jerusalem Bible. But such aids can be no substitute for the indispensable condition of understanding the psalms, and that is a pretty thorough familiarity with the Old Testament as a whole. The language of the psalter is the language of all the Hebrew Old Testament, and only constant familiarity with

biblical turns of phrase and tricks of expression will bring understanding of them.

There is an even more important reason why we cannot hope to understand the psalms if we do not know the rest of the Bible. The psalmists, like the other prophets and instruments of divine revelation, experienced God and expressed their experience in terms of Israel's history. Hence a fairly detailed knowledge of that history, from Genesis onwards, is a necessary condition of appreciating the psalms. There are a few psalms which are little more in fact than synopses of Israel's history, with its religious lessons brought out: Psalms 77, 104, 105. But there are many others which are full of historical allusions, and of names like Edom, Moab, Oreb and Zeb, and phrases like 'as in the provocation, according to the day of temptation in the desert, where your fathers tempted me', which are meaningless without reference to the people's history. A feel for the historical background is also desirable for a full appreciation of such magnificent war songs as Psalms 17 and 59. It is admittedly scarcely ever possible to give any particular psalm its own precise historical context or date; but a knowledge of the history will make possible certain illuminating guesses. Psalm 45 for example seems to fit the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, Psalm 117 the beginning of rebuilding the Temple under Zorobabel.

The psalmists also experienced God in nature (Psalm 103), and they seem to have felt a strong analogy between nature and the Law, and to have rejoiced in the harmony between these two works of the one Creator and Lawgiver, each reflecting his power and his wisdom; hence the juxtapositions which seem at first so inconsequential in Psalms 18, 134, 135, 146-7. But the most direct contact, so to say, which the psalmists had with the God of Israel was in the setting of the Holy City Jerusalem, where God dwelt on Mount Sion in the midst of his people. It was there that Israelites went up to meet God, to enter into his presence, to see his glory, to shelter beneath the shadow of his wings. And so some of the most lyrical psalms have Sion and Jerusalem for their theme: Psalms 83, 86, 121, 124. The Holy City is the object of such love and veneration that it is personified, as in Psalms 146-7, almost instinctively. The great feasts at Jerusalem, especially Tabernacles, which seems to have been pre-eminently the Temple feast (the Pasch was much more of a family celebration in ancient

Israel), were the occasion and theme of many psalms, especially those which proclaim the kingship of the Lord, e.g. Psalms 23, 92, 95, 96, 97. A theory which has had some vogue in recent times, and is very attractive, holds that these psalms were sung at an annual 'enthronement of Yahweh', when the ark of the covenant, over which God was considered to be enthroned on the Cherubim with the ark as his footstool, would have been carried in procession out of the Temple, through the city, and back again to the Holy of Holies.

The kingship of the Lord was closely associated with and represented by the throne of the kings of the house of David. The king in ancient Judah was a central liturgical as well as political figure, and the sacred monarchy is the theme and setting of a number of royal or messianic psalms: Psalms 2, 19, 20, 44, 71, 109. The hopes centred on the 'anointed of the Lord' (every king was a Messiah, or anointed one), which these psalms express, were the seeds from which grew the transcendent messianic expectations, looking forward to a more than earthly, in all ways perfect, royal redeemer, that our Lord came in so unexpected a manner to fulfil.

Now for a few words about what I call, rather inadequately, the psychological setting of the psalms. Many, if not most, of them are highly personal in tone, and express in very forcible terms the individual psalmist's personal attitude to God, to himself, and to other people. It is in this respect, perhaps, that the psalms can be most disconcerting to the modern mind, repelling it by the very qualities which are also their most compelling attraction. There is nothing indifferent or neutral about the 'dramatis personae' of these personal psalms, or about the psalmists' attitude towards them. Everything is in black and white, everything, we feel, is stated in extremes; there is on the one hand God and those who love him, his servants, the just, the innocent, the upright, the poor and needy with the psalmist among them; and on the other side there are those who hate God, the wicked, the sinners, the deceitful, the proud and rich and oppressive. And the sublime vehemence with which the psalmist expresses the aspirations of the 'white' side towards God, their love, their longing, their hopes and fears, their faith and courage and their persistent prayer, would move us more unreservedly, we think, if only it were not counter-balanced by

the vehemence of his sentiments against the 'black', by the unabashed expressions of hatred, by the vindictive maledictions and the clamour for vengeance. What is a Christian to make, in all seriousness, of Psalm 108, which only concentrates in one psalm what is scattered through the rest of the psalter? 'May his sons be orphans and his wife a widow, may his children wander homeless and begging, may they be cast out of their devastated homes . . . , may no one show him mercy, may there be none to take pity on his orphaned children. . . .' It scarcely matches 'But I say unto you, love your enemies'. 'Blessed be the man who takes and dashes her little ones against the rock', 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

And yet without the savage virulence of the psalms the charity of the gospels makes no sense and has no value. If you want the one, you must have the other too. Loving your enemies is meaningless unless in some sense you also hate them, otherwise you are only practising Stoic indifference; our Lord's forgiveness of his murderers must be seen against the background of the curses, the woes, he had pronounced upon them, in the 23rd chapter of St Matthew. You can only forgive a debt to which you first lay claim.

Now the psalmists knew as well as we do that you cannot put people in neat categories of black and white, just and unjust, without qualification. They knew that the just, among whom they counted themselves, are also sinners, because they frequently confess their sins and pray for forgiveness. Psalm 31 is a complete statement of the doctrine of penance. David their patron had been guilty of rounding off his adultery with Bethsabee by the singularly base murder of her husband. They knew also that the wicked are open to conversion; Psalm 2, an uncompromisingly fierce psalm, ends with an exhortation to God's rivals 'to understand' and to the powerful 'to be instructed'. But they also knew, better perhaps than we do, that wickedness and goodness have no reality as mere ideas or abstractions—Hebrew is a language very poor in abstract nouns—but only as things, that is as deeds and as the doers of deeds. And their touchstone of right and wrong was not any moral philosophy and its abstract notions, but the supreme rock-like reality of the God of Israel. If our deeds and therefore our characters are now such a mixture of good and bad that we cannot justly put anyone into pure black or white

categories, the judgment of God is nonetheless unerringly discriminating, and one day his judgment *will* finally sort out the black from the white, and separate the sheep from the goats.

St Augustine says that we should read the maledictions of the psalms as expressions of prophetic knowledge rather than of vengeful desires. This may seem a very artificial solution to the difficulty. But there is something in it. Exaggeration, for which grammarians use the politer word hyperbole, was as characteristic of the Hebrews as understatement is of the English. The psalmists were so convinced of the ultimate black-and-whiteness of things, which is demanded by the absolute 'all-whiteness' of God, that they stated their actual situations in terms of it. And so on the one hand their own vehement wish to be numbered among the friends of God was expressed by the positive statement that they were, then and there, innocent and just and lovers of the Law and therefore already his perfect friends; and on the other their conviction that the wicked were his enemies found expression in the wish that they should be treated as such, then and there. It is not a point that I can develop now, but this exaggerated character of so much Old Testament language is of supreme importance as a means of forcing on the Hebrew mind an awareness of the next life, of the resurrection, of eternal rewards and punishments, and hence an ever more urgent expectation of a heavenly redeemer.

I have left myself very little time for considering the total or Christian setting of the psalms. But this note of exaggeration or hyperbole so characteristic of their language leads us straight into it. If you consider the psalms simply as Old Testament hymns, they must undoubtedly be regarded as expressions of a childhood religion compared with the adult worship of Christianity. Old Testament religion was not perfect, because it was not complete. But it is precisely the inspired 'big talk' of the psalms which makes it possible for the adult worshipper of the gospel to use them, and apply them to new perspectives which no exaggeration can do justice to. Meanwhile let us take another rule from St Augustine. All the psalms, he says, are uttered in the name of Christ, of the whole Christ, head and body. So sometimes it is Christ the head who speaks in the psalms, and sometimes it is the body of Christ. Thus all the 'dramatis personae' of the psalms acquire a new dimension. Sion and Jerusalem are the heavenly

city of the Apocalypse, they stand for the Church triumphant or militant as the case, or the taste, may be. The warlike king, the persecuted poor man, are Christ in his glory and his humiliation, and Christ in his members humbled to be exalted. The psalmist's enemies are Christ's enemies—and if we are fortunate enough to know nobody to whom we can apply Psalm 108, it is at least salutary to remind ourselves of the dreadful possibility of its being applied to us.

I would like to conclude by dwelling briefly on the fact that the psalms are inspired prayers. As St Paul says, we know not how to pray as we ought. We only pray well when the Holy Ghost prays in us 'with unspeakable groanings'. Well, he prayed pre-eminently in the psalmists. Theirs *was* a childhood religion, and it had the directness, the frankness, the immediacy of childhood. God was so much more real to them than he usually is to us. This is something which need not be, but often is lost to the grown-up Christian. God has given us in Christ a revelation which has the wide horizons of the adult world. But from the days when our religion—and our religion of course is identical with the psalmists'—from the days when our religion was in its infancy God has left us the psalms to be the Church's special prayer as well as the Temple's. In the psalms we can respond to the adult experience of the full revelation in Christ with the vital directness and innocence of childhood, and this is the most proper response for those who have been born again as the children of God.



OUR LADY IN THE SCRIPTURES

REGINALD GINNS, O.P.

THE present article continues the study begun in the May number of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* under the title of our Lady in Tradition. In that article there was occasion to remark on the benign and gratifying way in which the great organs of the secular press have reported the events connected with the centenary celebrations of the apparitions of

our Lady at Lourdes. But I went on to say that this seemed too good to last, and that the year would not pass without a resurrection of the old threadbare objections to Catholic doctrine and devotion concerning the Mother of God. We have not had long to wait. In a recent review¹ of the new book on Cardinal Newman by the French Oratorian, Père Bouyer, we are treated to such judgments as the following:

'It did not take him (Newman) long to realize that in the Roman Church, as he found it, creative theology was dead. . . . Such new theology as there was, contributed by Manning and Ward, Faber and his *giovani*, was romantic when it was not repulsive or ridiculous; and if this attempt to graft the blooms of Italian mariolatry on to solid English roots had only a qualified success, it was Newman's prestige and deep theological piety which stopped it.'

For a collection of ineptitudes, this would be hard to beat. If the writer imagines that it was Newman who prevented English Catholics from going 'all Italian' under the influence of Faber and his companions of the London Oratory, then he has never heard of Ullathorne and the stolid English Catholic clergy and laity of the nineteenth century. And his phrases like 'solid English roots', and 'the infection of English piety by southern superstitions', smack somewhat of the spirit in which the Puritan Milton boasted that, when God wishes to communicate anything to the world, he first reveals it to his Englishmen. On the whole the tendentiousness of the review recalls the story of the university professor of English Literature who delivered himself of the judgment that Newman's style woefully declined after his 'secession to Rome'. And when a member of his audience objected that this opinion was proved wrong by the masterly prose of the *Apologia* and the elegant diction of *The Second Spring*, the professor replied that the writings of Newman as a Catholic were of no interest to him, and that he had little acquaintance with them. It seems likely that the reviewer might have to make a similar confession about the Cardinal's writings and sermons about our Blessed Lady. But there are people who think that any stick is good enough to beat the dog with.

The language and sentiments of Faber, of course, were by no means those of Newman either about our Lady or anything

1 *The Times Literary Supplement*, May 23, 1958.

else, just as they were not those of Ullathorne or the old English Catholics who looked a little askance at the bubbling enthusiasm of the new converts. But I doubt if there is anything of a strictly doctrinal character in Faber's, or Ward's, or Manning's praises of the Blessed Virgin which cannot be paralleled in the writings of Newman. Take, for instance, the section on the prerogatives of Mary in the *Development of Christian Doctrine*:²

The special prerogatives of St Mary, the *Virgo Virginum*, are intimately involved in the doctrine of the Incarnation itself. As is well known, they were not fully recognized in the Catholic ritual till a late date, but they were not a new thing in the Church, or strange to her early teachers. St Justin, St Irenaeus, and others, had distinctly laid it down that she not only had an office, but bore a part, and was a voluntary agent, in the actual process of redemption, as Eve had been instrumental and responsible in Adam's fall. They taught that, as the first woman might have foiled the Tempter and did not, so, if Mary had been disobedient or unbelieving on Gabriel's message, the Divine Economy would have been frustrated. And certainly the parallel between 'the Mother of all the living' and the Mother of the Redeemer may be gathered from a comparison of the first chapters of the Scripture with the last. . . . Here, however, we are not so much concerned to interpret the Scripture as to examine the Fathers. Thus St Justin says, 'Eve, being a virgin and incorrupt, having conceived the word from the Serpent, bore disobedience and death; but Mary the Virgin, receiving faith and joy, when Gabriel the Angel evangelized her, answered, *Be it unto me according to thy word*. And Tertullian says that, whereas Eve believed the Serpent and Mary believed Gabriel, 'the fault of Eve in believing, Mary by believing hath blotted out'. St Irenaeus speaks more explicitly: 'As Eve', he says, 'becoming disobedient, became the cause of death to herself and to all mankind, so Mary too, having the predestined Man, and yet a Virgin, being obedient, became cause of salvation both to herself and to all mankind'. This becomes the received doctrine in the post-Nicene Church. And it was the received doctrine of Newman himself. The reviewer is welcome to search the writings of Faber, Ward and

Manning, or to examine 'Italian mariolatry' and 'southern superstition', in order to see if he can find anything stronger than that phrase 'Mary . . . became cause of salvation both to herself and to all mankind'. As for the 'romantic theology' with which he credits those writers, he may like to compare the concluding words of Newman who has proceeded from the above quotation to speak of two instances of our Lady's intercession, the first related by St Gregory of Nyssa concerning his namesake, the Thaumaturgus; the other told by St Gregory Nazianzen concerning a Christian woman:

In both these instances the Blessed Virgin appears especially in the character of Patroness or Paraclete, which Irenaeus and other Fathers describe, and which the Medieval Church exhibits—a loving Mother with clients.

To call our Lady a Paraclete might shock even 'southern superstition'. But in the next chapter the Cardinal makes a telling hit against those who speak so contemptuously of southern superstition.

It has been anxiously asked, he says, whether the honours paid to St Mary, which have grown out of devotion to her Almighty Lord and Son, do not, in fact, tend to weaken that devotion; and whether, from the nature of the case, it is possible so to exalt a creature without withdrawing the heart from the Creator. . . . I would here observe that the question is one of fact, not of presumption or conjecture. . . . Here I observe, first, that to those who admit the authority of the Fathers of Ephesus, the question is in no slight degree answered by their sanction of the *Theotokos*, or 'Mother of God', as a title of St Mary, and as given in order to protect the doctrine of the Incarnation, and to preserve the faith of Catholics from a specious Humanitarianism. And if we take a survey at least of Europe, we shall find that it is not those religious communions which are characterized by devotion towards the Blessed Virgin that have ceased to adore her Eternal Son, but those very bodies which (being unfettered by State law) have renounced that devotion. The regard for his glory, which was professed in that keen jealousy of her exaltation, has not been supported by the event. They who were accused of worshipping a creature in his stead, still worship him; their accusers, who hoped to worship him so purely, they, wherever obstacles to

the development of their principles have been removed, have ceased to worship him altogether.

We are all aware that this stricture of the Cardinal's is very much more *apropos* in our day than it was in his.

It will be thought that this is a lengthy introduction to our present subject, and that it should rather have formed part of the preceding article. Indeed, some will object that the order ought to have been reversed, and that the witness of the Scriptures logically precedes the witness of Tradition. This objection will be urged all the more strongly by those who still maintain the principle of the Protestant reformers: that the Bible alone is the rule of Christian faith and worship, and that any tradition not identical with Scripture is of no authority in these matters. But, Newman indicates in the book just quoted, that is by no means the Catholic view of the case; and this is expressly confirmed by the declaration of the Vatican Council in its dogmatic constitution concerning faith:

Supernatural revelation, as we learn from the belief of the universal Church declared for us by the holy Council of Trent, is contained in written books [of Holy Scripture] and in the unwritten traditions received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself or handed down to us, as though by the hands of the Apostles, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost.³

And when we come to consider the written Scriptures, it must be pointed out once again that, although the Church at her institution by Jesus Christ took over from Israel all the canonical books of the Old Testament, she could not in the same way take over and make her own the writings of the New Testament. How could she, for they were neither written nor yet thought of by man? Consequently, there is no room for the strange conclusion that the Scriptures have produced the Church. On the contrary it ought to be recognized that we owe the Scriptures to the Church: for, in the case of the Old Testament, it is she who guarantees for us their authenticity, their canonicity, their divine inspiration, and consequently their truth; and in the case of the New it must be said that she herself has written it by the hands of her children, after having lived and taught for a generation before it was written. In the words of one of the greatest biblical scholars of our time, 'the New Testament is the

echo of our Christian religion';⁴ which is to say nothing less than that it is the authoritative and guaranteed account of the traditional faith of the primitive Church, *the faith once delivered to the saints*. But it is not, nor does it ever claim to be, the full and final account of that traditional faith. There is, therefore, too much to be said in favour of giving the Church's traditional witness concerning our Lady before approaching the witness of the Scriptures. And in view of what has been said above concerning the Church's authority guaranteeing the Bible, it surely follows that she and her learned doctors ought to be recognized as the authoritative interpreters of Scripture; that too is a way of passing on the voice of Tradition. Whatever texts she has interpreted officially we must interpret as she does, though in point of fact the authoritative interpretations binding upon us are not very numerous. But to me it seems altogether unreasonable to believe that Almighty God would take the trouble of supernaturally inspiring the sacred authors to write down for the sake of posterity the divine truths which he had revealed to mankind for their salvation, and then to suppose that he had taken no care to make sure of the preservation of those truths in their precise meaning. That would scarcely be in accordance with human, let alone divine, wisdom. To quote again the words of Père Lagrange:⁵

Revelation, once completed, is deposited in a Church. Now it is essential that this precious deposit, if it is to be of any use to us, should be well guarded; and that is what is meant by the Holy Ghost's assistance of the Church, an assistance which extends to the whole of revelation, whether oral or written. All this we learnt in our catechism as children, and we still think it right and fitting, worthy of the goodness and wisdom of God, and well adapted to the needs of our human nature. True, it imposes on us a state of subjection, but how much more reasonable that subjection is than a state of slavish subjection to mere texts!

All this is rendered necessary by the objection, so often repeated in recent years, that Catholic teaching and devotion concerning the Mother of God is quite unscriptural. The first thing to be decided before that point can be settled is this: What do the

4 M. J. Lagrange, *La Méthode Historique* (1903), p. 52.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

Scriptures say on the matter, and who is to interpret it? It recalls again the memory of Tertullian's advice concerning arguments about the meaning of Scripture texts:

The real and only question at issue is, whose is the faith, whose are the Scriptures; by whom, and through whom, and when, and to whom was delivered that teaching by which men are Christians? You will find the truth of the Scriptures and of their meaning and of all Christian tradition there where you find the truth of Christian teaching and faith.⁶

This was his way of appealing to the voice of living tradition within the Church, a thing upon which the Fathers and writers of the early Church never tire of insisting;⁷ a rule of faith enunciated by Papias a century before the time of Tertullian: 'For I considered that I should not get so much profit from what was written in books as from the voice which yet lives and remains'.⁸ These words recall the striking passage in which Plato reports that his master Socrates had said to Phaedrus to the same effect:

For this, I conceive, is the evil of the written word, and herein it closely resembles painting. The creatures of the latter art stand out before you as though they were alive; but if you ask them a question, they look very solemn but say never a word. And so it is with written discourses. You could fancy that they speak as though they were possessed of sense; but if you want to understand something they say and question them about it, you find that they repeat but one and the same story. Moreover, every discourse, once written down, is tossed about from hand to hand, equally among those who understand it and those for whom it is in no wise fitted; and of itself, it knows not to whom it ought, and to whom it ought not to speak. And when it is misunderstood and unjustly attacked, it always needs its father to help it; for, unaided, it can neither retaliate nor defend itself.⁹

An excellent text to use in arguments about the insufficiency of the Protestant rule of faith!

All the same it would be a grave error if I seemed to favour the opinion that, possessing the living voice of tradition, we can dispense with the written teaching of the Holy Scriptures. On

De Praescriptionibus adversus haereses, 19.

Cf. THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, August 1957.

In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii, 29.

Phaedrus, *Lysis and Protagoras*, trans. by J. Wright, p. 106.

the contrary, although, as the Vatican Council declares, there exists an oral tradition within the Church which is distinct from the Scriptures, nevertheless most of the authoritative teaching of the faith consists of the Church's magisterial interpretation of the Holy Writ. And this, as we have just seen in the words of Cardinal Newman, is especially true in the development of doctrine concerning the Mother of God, just as it is true in the doctrinal development of the truth of the Incarnation. Indeed the two doctrines naturally go hand in hand. Let me quote again from Ullathorne's treatise on the Immaculate Conception which was drawn upon in the preceding article concerning our Lady in Tradition.

The sum and conclusion which results from this exposition is that the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of our Redeemer is as ancient as the mystery of the Redemption. It forms a component part of that grand scheme of human reparation disposed before the ages in the all-conceiving mind of Eternal Wisdom. The first intimations of the mystery reach our ears from the earthly Paradise. The words of the Almighty resound across the ages from the Book of Genesis. And amidst the cries of woe and distress from our apostate progenitors amidst God's terrible denunciations of their crime, amidst the tempest of maledictions which come pouring on the world amidst the awful curses with which the wrath of the Eternal overwhelms the infernal author of our ruin, there breathe tender notes of his love for man, which prelude the solution of the world's catastrophe. They announce the coming of a new Mother, a Mother of life, a Mother who, as well as her offspring, shall be victorious over the devil, and shall pass untouched by his evil powers to the fulfilment of her great office. And the first intimation of the Gospel of peace is the proclamation of that Immaculate Mother. And as the Old Testament begins by proclaiming her, so the New Testament begins with the words addressed to her from Heaven: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee*. That is, as an ancient Father writes, 'Hail, formed in grace'.¹⁰

It would be unreasonable in the short space of an article to look for a treatment of all the texts of Old and New Testament

¹⁰ *The Immaculate Conception*, Ullathorne, p. 200.

which have reference in their literal or spiritual sense to prerogatives of our Lady. Indeed one article would hardly suffice to discuss the linguistic and exegetical problems which arise from the one text of Genesis iii, 15, to which our attention is drawn in the above extract. The same might be said of the Gospel text in question, occurring in the Annunciation narrative of Luke i, 26-35. But in one case as in the other we may safely rely, as Ullathorne and Newman rely, on the Church's traditional interpretation made clear to us both in the writings of the Fathers and in the pages of the New Testament. If we are content to accept the New Testament as 'the echo of our Christian religion', the faithful mirror of the life and faith of the primitive Church—and unbiassed biblical scholarship has now no hesitations on this point—then we can have no doubts about how the first generation of Christians interpreted the mysterious text of Genesis, which we may translate legitimately, according to the opinion of sound Catholic exegesis, as follows: *I will put enmities between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It (her seed) shall crush thy head, and thou shalt wound (or lie in wait for) its heel.*

Even a cursory acquaintance with the epistles of St Paul makes it abundantly clear that in his eyes the seed of the woman destined to crush the head of the serpent is the seed of Abraham in which all the nations of the earth are to find their happiness; and that seed is none other than Christ, as he declares in Galatians ii, 16. *The God of peace crush Satan under your feet speedily*, he writes to the Romans, xvi, 20 certainly with this text of Genesis in his mind. Likewise the author of Hebrews when he says (ii, 14): *Therefore because children are sharers of (the same) flesh and blood, (Jesus) also himself in like manner hath become a sharer of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil.* And finally, John in his first epistle (iii, 8): *For this purpose the Son of God appeared that he might destroy the works of the devil.* It was inevitably, then, that the Mother of the Son of God should be associated with him in the mind of the Church in the great work of his Incarnation, as she was associated with him in this first of the biblical prophecies. And therefore the Fathers of the Church, carrying on the ancient tradition of primitive times, make the woman Eve a figure of the second Eve.

But the second Eve reverses the role of the ancient Eve, just as

the hymn declares that she reverses the name—

Sumens illud ave

Gabrielis ore,

Funda nos in pace

Mutans nomen Evae.

It was not that the Angel's *Ave* merely reversed the name Eva. All that Mary stands for completely changes the situation of Eve. Eve had entered into friendly and idle gossip with Satan, thus exposing herself to the temptation to which she yielded; and so she brought death to her children, despite the fact that she received her name *because she was the mother of all the living* (Gen. iii, 20). The second Eve was to be Mother of all the living in a better sense. We salute her so when we sing to her, 'Our life, our sweetness, and our hope, to thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve'. Between the second Eve and Satan there were to be no friendly dealings, but stark and undying enmity because of the fruit of her blessed womb. Enmity between mankind and serpents is natural because of the character of the serpent. The Son of Mary was to deal with the great serpent in the way that dangerous reptiles are generally dealt with; he would crush its head with his heel and so render it powerless to harm.

These first pages of the Bible carry our thoughts to its closing pages, where we are able to read some of the latest Scriptural testimonies to the traditional teachings of the infant Church. Newman reminds us of this in one of the passages of *The Development of Christian Doctrine*.

The parallel, he says, between 'the Mother of all the living' and the Mother of the Redeemer may be gathered from a comparison of the first chapters of Scripture with the last. It was noticed in a former place that the only passage where the serpent is directly identified with the evil spirit occurs in the twelfth chapter of Revelations; now it is observable that the recognition, when made, is found in the course of a vision of a 'woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet': thus two women are brought into contrast with each other. Moreover, as it is said in the Apocalypse, 'the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went about to make war with the remnant of her seed', so is it prophesied in Genesis, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise

his heel.' Also the enmity was to exist, not only between the serpent and the Seed of the woman, but between the serpent and the woman herself; and here too there is a correspondence in the Apocalyptic vision. If then there is reason for thinking that this mystery at the close of the Scripture record answers to the mystery in the beginning of it, and that 'the Woman' mentioned in both passages is one and the same, then she can be none other than St Mary, thus introduced prophetically to our notice immediately on the transgression of Eve.¹¹

In other words, as the Cardinal has already reminded us, and as the earliest and most constant tradition of antiquity insists, the special prerogatives of our Blessed Lady are intimately involved in the doctrine of the Incarnation itself. The Fathers of Ephesus summed them all up in the one pregnant word *Theotokos*, Mother of God. When you have said that you have said all.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 415-6.



THE QUEST FOR GOD IN THE JUDEAN DESERT

I. The Men of Qumran

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

IT is an age-old commonplace of spiritual writers that God is mysteriously nearer to those who would flee 'the world' and seek him alone in solitude. Such writers can justifiably point to the origins of monastic life in the deserts of Egypt, as also to the constant renewal of a monastic ideal by a return to the desert as can be seen in Cîteaux's efforts. In our own day a Père de Foucauld lived and died like an ermite of old; and that precious life and death would seem to have begotten a thriving new spiritual movement in the Church. That solitudes and deserts can foster and nurture spiritual realities is certainly a traditional and valid theme. We can always retain the doggerel-like text 'O

beata solitudo, O sola beatitudo ('Blest solitude, our solitary bliss').

But now, in the Judean desert, a completely new area of spiritual productivity has become known to us in the last ten years. A new world of prayer and of prayerful people have been revealed. At least a preliminary chapter needs to be added to all our histories of the monastic life or of spirituality (in so far as such can be written).

In the Judean desert there lived the men of Qumrân, seemingly from 164 or 150 B.C. till 70 A.D., with a notable break in 31 B.C., the year of a devastating earthquake, till 4 B.C. We say the 'men of Qumrân' because 'community' might be a little misleading. Terms such as 'the Assembly' or 'the Elect' represent rather better how they looked at and thought of themselves. In origin they were devout Jews who, under the leadership of the 'Teacher of Right', voluntarily exiled themselves to the desert of Juda, and notably to that portion immediately West and North-West of the Dead Sea. The centre of the area is about twelve miles, as the crow flies, from Jerusalem.

We can gain from considering this region which is so special in so many ways. From Jerusalem to the north-west shore of the Dead Sea the ground drops rapidly from 2,500 feet above to over 1,000 feet below sea-level. The whole region is broken up and rocky, growing more and more desolate as you walk down the gullies towards the Dead Sea. Several wadis or occasional torrent-beds break through the rock formations from west to east; thus the wadi of the Cedron can be followed from Jerusalem itself, down past the fourth-century monastery of Mar Saba, and on to the Dead Sea. This wadi forms a southern boundary for the principal area of the Scrolls, though other finds were made in the Wadi Murabba'at further south. The centre of the headquarters of the men of Qumrân has been found and excavated at Khirbet Qumrân. That centre and all the adjacent region is well below sea-level, and for the most part dry and barren and sinister. The very jagged hill ridges are honey-combed with caves which for centuries have been hot and dark. Five miles north of the region is and was the oasis and copious water of Jericho; to the south was an almost equally famous oasis at Ain Gedi (or Engaddi, of our Bible texts). Even when there are torrential downpours at Jerusalem or Bethlehem or the hill ridges above, little rain is known in this lower region. We have mostly dry and more

Egypt-like conditions. Because of these very special conditions, a great number of scrolls (of animal skins), some cloths, and innumerable fragments of papyri have survived, in a way which has never been thought possible in Palestine. Remains of at least one large library (community library?) and several individuals' books have been found; in effect, there are ten complete scrolls, and fragments of some six hundred different works have so far been recognized.

From the remains and fragments of so much writing we can reasonably arrive at an identification of the 'men of Qumrân'. There is still some debate possible¹; yet it seems true that the majority of scholars now agree that the men of Qumrân were Essenes, who so far had been only known to us in the fulsome descriptions of Josephus, from Philo, and from a few almost casual references in classical writers. One should be particularly noted. Pliny the Elder visited Palestine and Syria; and of his two-page description of the region he devotes one whole page to this Qumrân area, saying: 'West of the Asphaltite lake (Dead Sea) are installed the *Essenes*, some way from and above the noxious banks of the shore. A solitary people they are, and most extraordinary, without women, without love, without money, and whose only company is the palm-trees. Yet they regularly renew themselves, and recruits come in plenty, either people tired of life or those whom reverses of fortune have driven to this mode of life. And so, for thousands of years, however unbelievable it may seem, a people among whom no one is born lives on unendingly. In this way, thanks to them, those who repent of their lives can do so profitably.'

'A little below the Essenes (i.e. further south) stood the town of Engaddi, second only to Jericho for its flourishing palm-groves, but today reduced to ruins. A little lower still in the fortress of Masada, in the mountain, and also withdrawn from the Asphaltite lake.'

There are fanciful elements in this text, but the geography is accurate, and we can take Pliny's evidence that the men of Qumrân were in fact the Essenes, or at least a branch of the Essenes. We can also note Pliny's amazement, almost shocked attitude when faced with what appeared to be large-scale

Thus Professor C. Rabin argues that the Qumrân community maintained the pharisaic *haburah* of the first century B.C., etc. (Cf. *Qumrân Stories*, O.U.P., 1957.)

celibacy, which to him, as to many a present-day pagan, was incomprehensible and unnatural and nothing more².

The ideas and ideals revealed to us by the finding of the library remains and fragments deserve to be studied for their own sake and also as an important element in the back-ground of the Incarnation. For the moment let us consider some of the guiding principles and spiritual teachings of the men of Qumrân.

The Assembly of the Elect was ruled by a Manual of Discipline (several copies have been found); nowadays we would say 'constitutions'. Rules played a large part. There was a rigorous period of initiation, then tests, constant probation, and so to maturity of life—very much in terms of moral maturity. The regulations or rulings savour much of pharasaism; but we must not think of pharasaism in the pejorative sense alone. There was an inward Spirit, and the men of Qumrân were taught and realised that³ 'only through the Holy Spirit can we achieve union with God's truth and be purged of all iniquities. . . . For it is only through the spiritual apprehension of God's truth that man's ways can be properly directed. . . . Only by a spirit of uprightness and humility can his sin be atoned. Only by the submission of his soul to all the ordinances of God can his flesh be made clean. Only then can it really be sprinkled with waters of ablution. . . .'

There was indeed to be a Holy Spirit as the mainspring of all human living and loving, and the very rule itself is full of spiritual content, as we can gather from some of its noble opening words: ' . . . to seek God . . . to do what is good and upright in his sight, in accordance with what he has commanded through Moses and through his servants, the prophets; to love all that he has chosen and to hate all that he has rejected; to keep far from all evil and to cling to all good works. . . . Let all who would willingly serve God's truth bring all of their mind, all of their strength, and all of their wealth into the community of God, so that their minds may be purified by the truth of his precepts, their strength

2 Skeletons of women have been found in the outskirts of the cemetery at Qumrân. Josephus tells us that some Essene groups had families (B.J. 2, 8, 13), and the Zadokite document (several copies found at Qumrân) allows for the married (vii, 6a-9). Fr Milik likens these married Essenes to Tertiaries of a religious Order. (*Dix Ans de Découvertes dans le Désert de Juda*, pp. 44 and 111.)

3 Citations from the Scrolls are mostly in the rendering of T. H. Gaster, in *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect* (Secker and Warburg, 1957).

controlled by his perfect ways, and their wealth disposed in accordance with his just design. . . . ' (i, 1-15.)

From the beginning the novice, or 'initiate', is asked to be resolute in seeking the one true way which will maintain him in his election and God's friendship. Yet two ways were always possible, and the 'two ways' theme which was soon to reappear in Christian literature, notably in the *Didache*⁴. The Two Ways, set before all who would seek God, are represented as very much in the hands of God's all-seeing and irresistible providence and predetermination: 'all that is and ever was comes from a God of knowledge. Before things came into existence, he determined the plan of them; and when they fill their appointed roles it is in accordance with his glorious design that they discharge their functions. Nothing can be changed. In his hand is the government of all things.'

The characteristics of each 'way' are amplified and expressed in terms of the divergent activity of two groups of spirits: 'There is the way those spirits operate in the world for the enlightenment of man's heart, the making straight before him all the ways of righteousness and truth, the implanting in his heart of fear for the judgments of God. A spirit of humility and patience, abundant compassion, perpetual goodness, insight, discrimination, a sense of the Divine Power that is based at once on an apprehension of God's works and a reliance on his plenteous mercy. . . .'

'But to the spirit of perversity belong greed, remissness in right-doing, wickedness and falsehood, pride and presumption, deceit and guile. . . .'

The doctrine of *election* looms large, and the men of Qumrân often referred to themselves as the Elect, and were very conscious of this role for themselves. As examples let us cite a note on Psalm 37, 9: 'But they that wait upon Jahweh, those shall inherit the land'.

'The reference of the word "those" is to the congregation of God's elect, the men who do his will' (fragment A. Col. 1).

With the sense of election went a very firm consciousness of being in the tradition and faith of their fathers. Thus from the rather exotic writing on 'The Way of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness' we can extract a portion of the priestly blessing

⁴ Which, if we may accept the findings of the latest scholarly work, was contemporary with the later period of Qumrân, A.D. 50-70. (J. P. Audet, O.P., *La Didache, Etude Bibliques*, 1958).

(War xiii, 1-00): 'And now, God of our Fathers, we will bless your name for ever. We are the people (of Your inheritance). With our fathers you made a covenant, and you have confirmed it with their seed through all ages. In all the evidences of Your glory among us, there has always been the memory of Your covenant . . . You have made unto Yourself an eternal people, and You have cast our lot in the portion of light, that we may evince Your Truth; and from old You have charged the Angel of Light to help us. . . .'

The man of Qumrân would occupy his day with regular prayer, and meals in common, with manual labour: sheep and goat pasturing, pottery, tanning and skin preparation for books, and the constant copying and study of the Scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament. Rather more than a fourth of the texts and fragments found are Old Testament texts. A *scriptorium* or room for text transcription has been found, complete with desks and ink-well. Of special interest to us is that despite the rather piece-meal commentaries of the 'pesher' type, sc. 'This means . . .', 'this refers to . . .', there is all through an underlying devotion to truth; and 'truth' comes to be identified with the Torah, or Law of God, and serving or doing the Truth means keeping the Law: cf Comment on Habbakuk, 2, 3: '*Though it tarry, yet await it: for it will surely come, it will not delay*': 'This refers to the men of truth, the men who carry out the Law (Torah), whose hands do not flinch from serving the Truth, even though the final moment be long drawn out. For all the times appointed by God will come in due course even as he has determined in the secrets of his wisdom.' In this text, as in many others of this fragmentary literature, there is a strong undercurrent of Messianic expectation. The time was indeed ripe for the coming of a Redeemer whom the men of Qumrân never knew. Meanwhile they prayed and pondered deeply on the lovable truth of God. One of the finest utterances of these contemplative men seems to have survived complete (from the Book of Hymns, xi, 3-14. Translation of T. H. Gaster):

I give thanks unto thee, O my God,
for thou hast wrought a wonder with dust
and hast shown forth thy power
in that which is moulded of clay.

For thou hast made me to know the deep, deep Truth,
and to divine thy wondrous works,
and hast put in my mouth the power to praise,
and psalmody on my tongue,
and hast given me lips unmarred
and readiness of song,
that I may sing of thy lovingkindness
and rehearse thy might all the day
and continually bless thy name.

I will show forth thy glory
in the midst of the sons of men,
and in thine abundant goodness
my soul will delight.

For I know that thy mouth is truth,
and in thy hand is bounty,
and in thy thought all knowledge,
and in thy power all might,
and that all thy glory is with thee.

In thine anger come all judgments of affliction,
but in thy goodness pardon abounding;
and thy mercies are shed upon all
who do thy will.

For thou hast made them to know thy deep, deep truth
and divine Thine inscrutable wonders;
and, for thy glory's sake,
Thou hast granted it unto man
to be purged of transgression,
that he may hallow himself unto thee
and be free from all taint of filth
and all guilt of perfidy,
to be one with them that possess thy truth
and to share the lot of thy Holy Beings,
to the end that this worm which is man
may be lifted out of the dust
to the height of eternal things,
and rise from a spirit perverse
to an holy understanding,
and stand in one company before thee

with the host everlasting and the spirits of knowledge
and the choir invisible,
to be for ever renewed
with all things that are.

An immense amount has been written about the Scrolls of the Judean Desert; there has been much controversy, and much speculation. By contrast the love and faith of the men of Qumrân (not always appreciated) is for all time and is an inspiration and consolation to us now. When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote (Hebrews, II, 36-40): *'And others had trial of mockeries and stripes . . . being in want, distressed and afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth. And all these, being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise; God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us'*—was he not thinking of the men of Qumrân, coming at the end of a long and glorious tradition in Israel?



'LEVIATHAN WHICH YAHWEH MADE TO LAUGH AT'

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

WHY does God permit evil? It is a fatal timidity which induces us nowadays to pre-occupy ourselves exclusively with the apologetic aspects of this problem. A significant train of thought in the Bible invites us to see it from a far bolder, and I think from a more sublime, point of view. If we follow this train of thought we shall want not so much to apologize (in any possible sense of the word) for the fact of evil in the world, not so much to 'reconcile it with God's goodness' as to glory in its being there for him to conquer. For it pertains to God's glory that there should be positive forces of evil in the world, and that they should strive actively against his holy will—and not only that they should strive, but that they should seem for a time to prevail against him. It is glorious that there should

be a chaos-monster, an Assyrian army razing Juda, a cruel oppressor exploiting the widow and orphan, a Satan, an Antichrist. That God should have made all these and permitted them to be evil—that fact in itself is glorious.

This idea reaches its full maturity in the apocalyptic writings, above all in Daniel and the Apocalypse of St John. One after another the chaos-beasts come up from the sea. They symbolize the world powers of the apocalypticist's own time; in Daniel, the succession of empires from the neo-Babylonian to the Seleucids; in St John, the Roman emperors. They are allowed a space of time in which to achieve dominion in the world, to exact worship from its peoples, to blaspheme, to scandalize, to persecute. 'Why does God permit this evil?' cry God's people, the 'saints'. 'Because it is glorious that he should permit it', answer the apocalypticists. To them it has been given to look down on the world of their own time from the viewpoint of God and his angels. They see that the evil which appears so terrible from below is, in the designs of God, foreseen, calculated, allowed for, and controlled. In spite of themselves the powers of evil are made to give glory to God. Unwilling glory goes up to him from hell and its devils. The greater the power of evil in the world, the more the glory of God is made manifest in its ultimate overthrow. 'Above the same the smoke of praise rises from ocean rim to rim.' The relevance of all this to our own world hardly needs to be emphasized.

It is not my purpose in this short essay to explore the idea of 'Glory through Beings that are Evil' any farther in the apocalyptic writings. It will be even more valuable, perhaps, to try to grasp it at its roots in the older literary genres of the Bible, where it is far less easily recognized. In order therefore to show the pervasive unity of this idea in the Old Testament, I propose to examine certain aspects of it in three widely divergent contexts, namely the Psalms, Isaiah, and the second account of creation (Gen. ii, 4-iii). In the Psalms we shall recognize the idea of God's transcendence over evil conveyed through the image of the Divine laughter. In Isaiah we shall see God positively exploiting, 'taking occasion of' the power of evil with its blind arrogance to achieve his own dominion. Finally in the second account of creation the futility of sin in its attempts to frustrate God's purpose will provide the third, and the most significant, instance of this

idea. God manifests his omnipotence by his imperviousness to evil and sin.

THE PSALMS

In several passages in the psalms God is represented as laughing at his creatures. For example: 'He that dwells in heaven laughs the Lord derides them' (i.e. the hostile Gentile nations) (Psalm ii, 4). 'The Lord laughs at him (the impious) for he sees that his day is coming' (Psalm xxxvii, 13). 'But you, Yahweh, laugh at them, deride all the Gentiles' (Psalm 9). 'Leviathan which you made to laugh at' (Psalm civ, 26).

When we take these texts together there can be no mistaking their import. The forces of chaos and evil are represented respectively by the Gentile kings plotting against Yahweh and his Messiah (Psalm ii), by the impious heathens who oppress Israel (Psalm lix), and by Leviathan the water-monster, who personifies the sterile and chaotic ocean (Psalm civ). All of these in their various spheres work actively against Yahweh and strive to overthrow his glorious dominion. The waste ocean threatens constantly to sweep back over the dry land and its creatures, which Yahweh has fashioned and blessed with fruitfulness. The Gentiles are forever plotting to overthrow Israel, Yahweh's portion and people. The 'workers of iniquity' try ceaselessly to destroy the 'righteous ones' in whom Yahweh's dominion is embodied. And Yahweh laughs at them. His derision and contempt is a sign of his power. He is complete master of the situation. *Chaos and evil exist only because he made them and suffers them to be evil.* He permits the forces of evil to contend with him so that in crushing them his glorious power may be manifested. 'For this cause I have made you to stand firm', says Yahweh to Pharaoh through Moses, in order to show you my power, and so that my Name should be uttered throughout the earth' (Exod. ix, 16). The concept of glory is originally derived from the idea of triumph in battle, and in the Old Testament it often still bears this connotation. To 'glorify himself' in this sense, Yahweh raises up adversaries to contend with him and to be conquered. But he laughs at those adversaries because as their Creator he utterly transcends them. Moreover it should be noticed that he does not *achieve* glory by conquering his own creatures; rather he *manifests* to the world the glory he has possessed from all eternity.

Now let us compare this with the pagan concept of the conquest of evil and chaos as we find it among Israel's neighbours and forebears. The obvious example (though not the only one) is Marduk's victory over Tiamet in the Babylonian creation epic. Here evidently there is no question of Marduk (the creator-god) having created Tiamet (the personification of chaos), still less of him laughing at her. On the contrary, she exists before him, and he achieves his supremacy as creator-god only by vanquishing her at the end of a long and dangerous fight. Then he 'creates' the cosmos by refashioning the material of Tiamet's body according to his own plan. Here lies the precise difference between the pagan *myth* of creation, and the Hebrew *history* of creation. The pagan concept of creation is radically dualist. Good and evil, the divine and the diabolic confront one another as two positive forces in the world, absolutely and irreconcilably opposed. The Hebrew concept, on the other hand, is monist. Yahweh creates the chaos-force and he transcends and presides over the cosmic conflict constantly being waged between it and the forces of good through which his will is to be accomplished. He is outside the conflict and above it, not immersed in it or dependent on its outcome as Marduk was. The *myth* of the older pagan cosmogony becomes in Hebrew thought the *symbol* of the war between good and evil, light and darkness, cosmos and chaos, through which the creation and continuing growth of the world *under* Yahweh is achieved. Faced with Tiamet, Marduk has to fight for his life. Faced with Leviathan, Yahweh laughs. It is a sign of his absolute transcendence as creator of all things, Leviathan included, out of nothing.

ISAIAS

In the message of Isaias this idea of Yahweh's transcendence receives a fresh development. For Isaias is the first of the prophets to speak clearly and explicitly of Yahweh's presiding plan for his people and for the world. 'Let it draw near, let it arrive, the plan of the Holy One of Israel, that we may know it' (Isaias v, 19). 'Yahweh of hosts has sworn: Surely as I have *devised* so shall it be, as I have *planned* so shall it be accomplished' (Isaias xiv, 24). 'His name shall be called *Deviser* of Wonders . . .' (Isaias ix, 5).

To this plan of Yahweh is opposed the plan of the nations, the forces of impiety and destruction, and Isaias' thought persistently

returns to and develops from this concept of plan and counter-plan. Here too we find Yahweh laughing at the 'plan' or 'counsel' of the Gentiles opposed to him. 'The plan of Pharaoh's wise counsellors has become stupid. . . Where then are your sages? Only let them tell you, and let them know what Yahweh Sebaoth has planned against Egypt' (Isaiah xix, 11b-12. Cf. also the Mockery of the Tyrant, Isaiah xiv, 3-21, etc.).

The plan of the powers of evil is in fact the re-establishment of chaos in place of the cosmos which Yahweh has made, and which he is bringing inexorably to its fulfilment. But now Yahweh is not content merely to demonstrate his power by crushing them. He is actually using them and manipulating them to achieve the very object against which they are fighting, the establishment of his own glorious dominion over all the world. The Assyrian is actually 'the rod of his anger', though this is 'not what his (the Assyrian's) heart intends'. (Isaiah x, 5 ff.) Yahweh is positively directing the chaos-force here, causing it to sweep back over Israel as he caused the chaos waters to sweep back at the Flood over the world he had created. He uses it to purge away pollution from the land, saving only the 'righteous remnant', just as in primeval times he had saved the 'righteous remnant' of Noah and his family in the ark. Thus the 'remnant theme' which is to be found in the Flood story in its cosmic dimension is repeated in Isaiah in its political and social one.

The process by which chaos is allowed to resume its sway over the sinful people and their land is graphically described. The rational order of social and political life is completely inverted. In the old days, when Yahweh's will was done and the land prospered, youth revered age and the base-born respected the noble. But now 'The youth is insolent to the old man, and the commoner to the noble' (Isaiah iii, 5). The vilest beasts make their dens in the courts of kings and nobles (Isaiah xxxiv, 12 ff.). Yahweh stretches over them the line of waste and the plummet of confusion (Isaiah xxxiv, 11), that is to say he sets about letting loose waste and confusion in the land as systematically as a builder measuring a wall; but he never ceases to preside over, control, and limit the progress of the chaos.

THE SECOND ACCOUNT OF CREATION (Genesis ii, 4-iii)

The same systematic inversion of the natural order originally

established by Yahweh is to be found in the second account of creation. The formal structure of this story is highly significant and has not, perhaps, been sufficiently adverted to. It falls into two symmetrical halves (ii, 4-25, iii). In the first half the hierarchy among the creatures established by Yahweh's plan is very clearly defined. Man is to be subject to God and under him to have authority over all things; woman is to be subject to man; beasts are to be lowest of all. In the second half of the story we see this order systematically inverted and reduced to chaos, and it is, I think, deliberately told in such a way as to make the symmetry of this inversion stand out. Woman hearkens to beast; man hearkens to woman; man turns from Yahweh. The highest creature bows down to the lowest. In this inversion of the natural God-given order lies the essence of sin. The whole anti-idolatry polemic in Hebrew literature turns on this concept of the confusion and shame involved in 'exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things' (Romans 1, 23). This is the dimension of Adam's sin. The story of his fall is the story not only of the first sin, but of the prototype of all sins. Nowadays, it may be suggested, too much time and attention is devoted (the neglect of real exegesis) to the intriguing problem of what the exact nature of that sin was, to probing behind the symbol of the fruit and the serpent. Plausible and ingenious suggestions have not been wanting, but the reason the biblical author has left this point vague is simply *that from his point of view it is not important that we should know*. It is a side issue. What he does want to inculcate is that this is the sin of sins, the sin which contains within itself the elements of sin as such. The world order is reduced to chaos when man, the chief of all creatures, chooses to listen to the suggestion of a creature lower than himself, rather than to the command of the God who made him. It is the essence of sensuality for man to place himself on the level of a beast, and the essence of pride for him to seek equality with God. Adam does both these things at once.

Here then is a further projection of the work of the powers of evil. Sin produces waste and void, utter barren disorder, in the personal and social sphere. Still Yahweh transcends and dominates the situation. Still the element of ironic derision can be discerned in his anger, though less obviously now. 'See, Adam is become as

one of us to know good and evil' (Genesis iii, 22). In the first half of the story we see what Adam sought: knowledge which would make him like God. In the second half we see what he found: knowledge indeed, for his 'eyes were opened', but knowledge of his own nakedness, his baseness. The irony of the situation is fully deliberate. The effect of the sin is the symmetrical antithesis of what the sinner intended. Exactly the same ironic device is employed in the Mockery of the Tyrant (Isaias xiv, 3-21). First we are shown the sinner's intention to 'become as God'. 'You said in your heart, I will *climb* the heavens, I will raise up my throne above the stars of God. I will dwell . . . *in the remote places* of the north' (i.e. in the abode of God himself) (vv. 13-14). Then we see the effect of his sin which is the exact antithesis of what he intended. 'How you have been *brought down* to the underworld, to the *remote places* of the pit' (v. 15). The deliberate repetition of 'remote places', and the contrast between 'climb' or 'go up' in the first part, and 'be brought down' in the second, serve to point this antithesis. Inevitably it becomes somewhat blunted in translation. In this ironic antithesis the biblical author has another satirical device at his command for conveying Yahweh's derision of evil and its attempts at usurping his dominion.

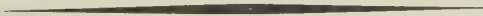
In this connection Adam's nakedness is a further significant feature. Numerous passages in the Old Testament illustrate the Hebrew attitude to physical nakedness. It is diametrically opposed to that of the Greeks (a fact which becomes particularly clear in the early history of the Maccabees). The exposure of the private parts of the human body was regarded with horror. It involved *bosheth*, which we usually translate quite inadequately as 'shame', but which means in reality utter confusion and the loss of elemental human dignity. A Semite would do almost anything to avoid this loss of his fundamental 'honour'. Hence the care which Noah's sons took not to see the nakedness of their father. (Genesis ix, 20 ff.). Semitic peoples were accustomed to punish their enemies by publicly exposing their nudity and mocking it. In several passages in the prophets Yahweh is represented as deriding his enemies, the 'evil-doers' in the same way. 'Yahweh will lay bare their secret parts' (Isaias iii, 17). 'And I will lift up your skirts upon your face, and expose your nudity to the Gentiles and your shame to the kingdoms' (Nahum iii, 5. cf. also Ezech.

vi, 37, etc.). It is in the light of these and similar passages that the significance of Adam's nakedness can be appreciated. He who strove to be Godlike in defiance of God finds himself bereft of human dignity, base, contemptible, ridiculous, and disgusting. The waste and void which he has introduced into the cosmic order by his sin turns inward and invades his own soul, filling him with the realization of his own *bosheth*. His sin, instead of frustrating Yahweh's designs, has branded him with its own shameful futility.

CONCLUSION

In this age and generation, which God has given to us, his Christian men, to love and to look after, the working of the chaos powers is evident enough. But we are not allowed to be dismayed. It is unworthy of a Christian, to whom God has disclosed his deep love, to be afraid of evil—to fail to see that it is actually and positively the occasion of God's glory. Serenely transcendent, the God who redeemed us presides over, controls, and 'takes occasion of' every possible form of the evil which exists in our own times. For a Christian, to rejoice is a command, though iniquity is multiplied, though we hear of wars and rumours of wars, though the powers of the heavens are shaken, though the Abomination of Desolation stands in the Holy Place, though we are hated of all nations for the sake of the Name, Christ. Confronted with this sort of world, we do not apologize. Apologetics may be very necessary for removing errors concerning the problem of evil—apologetics, but never apologies. For 'He that bears witness to these things says "Indeed I come quickly"'.
men.

'Come, Lord Jesus!'



SELECTIONS FROM PÈRE LALLEMANT

II—PERFECTION

Translated by HUGH FARMER, O.S.B.

HUMILITY

ST LAURENCE JUSTINIAN used to say that we do not know what humility is unless we have it in our hearts. Only those who are humble of heart can understand it; that is why our Lord said: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'¹

In order to acquire humility we must omit none of those exterior actions in which we can practise it on suitable occasions according to our state of life. We should also ask God for true sentiments of humility to accomplish well these exterior actions, which are sometimes performed for vainglory. Then we should very often make interior acts of humility by recognizing our nothingness and deficiencies and by loving humiliations; we should judge ourselves ceaselessly and condemn both ourselves and all our actions.

We should never reprove anyone without being convinced and acknowledging before God that we ourselves are far worse, and our actions are far worse than those of him we reprove.

When we begin to exercise some charge such as preaching a sermon or being Regent or Superior, we should prepare for it by some practice of humility like visiting the prisoners or the poor in hospital, serving at table, or something similiar.

The offices of humility and charity are the best because humility preserves peace and God's other gifts within us while charity keeps us busy with our neighbour. Let us be humble, patient, mortified and united to God, and he will bless our work. Its success depends entirely on his blessing, without which all our talents and energy are nothing.

God keeps for himself the dominion of the gifts he grants us. He wills to have the glory from them alone; he does not give them because of our excellence, but to manifest his own. We have, and should have, only their use; they are for God's glory alone and not for our own interests. This must be understood of all

kinds of graces, gifts and privileges, and even of natural qualities and talents. God leaves for us the profit and the utility of the good we accomplish and of the gifts we possess, but he reserves the glory for himself and does not will that we should attribute this to ourselves.

But we are not content with this division; we usurp God's share and want to have the glory as well as the profit from our good actions. This injustice is a kind of blasphemy, for nothing is due to Nature considered in itself (which is how we should consider it) except lowliness and humiliation. We should aspire to these with insatiable desire, because our true greatness consists in this: all the rest is only presumption and vanity, illusion and sin. Thus those who have the greatest desire for abjection are the greatest in God's sight. These are the ones who walk in truth more than anyone, and they are all the more like God because they seek only his glory. This is his own possession; glory belongs to him alone. But nothingness is our element, and if we claim anything else as our own, we are robbers. If we love the world's esteem and applause, we are mad and we are feeding on air.

We usually have a false idea of humility because we think it lowers us. In fact it does just the opposite; as it is pure truth and gives us true self-knowledge, it brings us closer to God. Thus it brings us true greatness, which is sought outside God in vain.

Humiliation lowers us only in men's esteem, which is nothing; but it raises us in God's esteem, in which our true glory consists. In these encounters to which nature is so sensitive we should remember that if men see us despised, derided and ridiculed, God sees us exceedingly ennobled. Through the very same things which diminish us in men's sight Jesus Christ delights to see us wearing his livery and the angels envy us this honour.

* * *

Someone will say: 'I cannot believe that I am a greater sinner than the others. Even if I do break rules, I see others who break more; if I commit certain faults, I know others who do worse.' The difficulty we find in having a humble opinion of ourselves comes from the fact that we are still hardly spiritual. When we are more advanced, we will achieve it. There are secrets in art and science known only to the masters: so also in the science

of the spirit, most excellent of all because purely supernatural, there are certain maxims which can only be understood by the saints who are its doctors. St Francis Assisi and St Francis Borgia were excellent masters of humility: they believed themselves the greatest sinners in the world, not just as a manner of speaking, but sincerely from the depths of their hearts. Their minds were quite convinced of the truth of what they said.

LOVE OF CROSSES

St Ignatius the martyr had the love of the cross and of his own annihilation so much in the forefront of his consciousness that, when condemned to be eaten by animals in the amphitheatre, he wanted the lions to consume his very bones after tearing his body to pieces: thus there would remain nothing of the holocaust he had consecrated to God in order to be his true disciple. He counted himself happy to be annihilated in his sufferings so that nothing of his body should remain in the eyes of the world. 'The world,' he said, 'will see my body no more', and he rejoiced at this thought.

Just as our Lord accomplished the redemption of the world only by his cross and death and the shedding of his blood and not by his miracles and preaching, so too the ministers of the Gospel bring to the faithful this grace of redemption only by the crosses and persecutions which they suffer. Hence great fruit should not be expected from their labours unless these are accompanied by reverses, calumnies, insults and suffering.

Some people think they are doing wonders when they give clever sermons which are well prepared and composed and agreeably delivered, and when they are in fashion and welcomed everywhere. They are in error. The means on which they rely are not those which God uses to accomplish great things. Crosses are necessary to gain the salvation of the world. It is by the way of crosses that God leads those whom he uses to save souls such as the Apostles and apostolic men like St Francis Xavier, St Ignatius, St Vincent Ferrer and St Dominic.

We should not consider our crosses and afflictions as evils which make us suffer, nor as mortifications which disparage us in the eyes of the world; instead we should follow our Lord's example and look at them in God's eternal purpose and his providential order and in consideration of his love for us. We

should also consider them in the heart of Jesus Christ, who has chosen them for us and offers them to us as the material for our crowns and a test of our virtue and fidelity in his service.

In the early stages of the spiritual life we should not yet ask God for sufferings; instead we should be intent on cleansing our consciences and obtaining purity of heart, recollection and knowledge of the interior life. Thence we rise to peace of soul and contact with God, then to the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. After that God instils his plans and wishes, leading some by their labours like St Francis Xavier, some by sufferings like St Lydwine, and others by reverses and persecutions like St Ignatius. We however should not choose a particular way for ourselves or we should always be in trouble through not yet having enough virtue for trials and crosses; it would be trying to carry a giant's load without the necessary strength. But when God calls us to enter states which are laborious, difficult and humiliating, neither will labours oppress us nor persecution trouble us; even great austerities will often not spoil our health.

of the Bible (what it is, how it came to be written, what demands it makes on us and how we must read it) which this excellent book will give them.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

LES PSAUMES. Commentés par La Bible. Psalms 1-50. Par Pierre Guichou. (Editions du Cerf.)

The Church is Christ's body, its members are the completion of its head (Eph. i, 23). The Church is Christ in the world, and in its members it continues through the centuries Christ's prayer. When the members adore, praise and thank the Father it is still Christ praying to the Father in them. In this way, as in all its work, it builds up Christ's body till he be filled 'all in all'. The purpose of this book is to equip Christ's members for this prayer-life in union with their head.

The author begins with the postulate that the Church should use the formulae consecrated by Christ himself, namely the Psalms. His idea is to extract the prayer-element in its Old Testament context and then to re-think and to re-pray it in New Testament terms and in New Testament relationship with God. In this way he makes of the New Testament a commentary upon the Old Testament. How thoroughly this is done is clear, for instance, from the fact that he uses more than twenty quotations (including citations from all four Gospels, Acts and several Epistles) to develop the thought of the short Psalm 6. There is nothing far-fetched or forced, ideas are developed naturally in the fuller light of the New Testament. The Old Testament plant produces the New Testament flower.

The book is not intended to take the place of a commentary. Introductory matter is kept to a minimum and the reader who wishes for more is referred to the standard commentaries. For the text of the Psalms (which is not printed out in the book) the reader is referred to the French of the Jerusalem Bible, but any translation will serve the purpose.

The method of exposition is uniform: first of all a literal explanation of the Psalm in its original setting, and then, under separate headings and in separate sections, the Psalm is given its New Testament application. For instance, in Psalm 3 the faith of the persecuted psalmist is triumphant over temptation coming from faint-hearted friends to lose trust in God. The author gives three further applications: the psalm is first made a prayer for the victims of modern social injustice, it is then applied to the sufferers from either persecution from without or spiritual anguish from within.

The author covers Psalms 1-50. I know of no better meditation book on the Psalms and of none that helps us to pray the Psalms so well. May it soon be translated into English!

RICHARD J. FOSTER

THE TWO-EDGED SWORD. By J. L. McKenzie, s.J. (Bruce, Milwaukee; \$4.50.)

'The Intelligent Modern Man's Guide to the Old Testament' would be a just sub-title for this supremely competent book. The author succeeds admirably in translating scriptural modes of thought into modern categories. He has at his command all the technique of a most persuasive debater. Particularly effective is his chapter on revelation and the 'otherness' of the God of the Hebrews, and his elaboration of a most useful distinction between history and story.

But the critical reader may perhaps gradually begin to feel a certain reserve, such as a skilful debater is always liable to build up against himself; a feeling, hard to justify in detail, that it is all a little too neat to be true, that reality is being tailored slightly to fit this smart suit of clothes. The author says excellently that 'we cannot say that the thoughts are from God, the language from man; for God uses both the thoughts and the language of the man through whom he writes'. But later on he says, 'it is, we think, sufficiently clear that the details of the account (of creation) are the work of the creative imagination, not of divine revelation'. This can of course be piously interpreted without difficulty to square with the former accurate statement of biblical inspiration. Yet the dichotomy has been introduced, the way is open for us to treat the details of any passage as so much literary decoration contributed by the writer with no direct relevance to the divine revelation. We are absolved from the effort of trying to discern a divine meaning even in the details, to grasp revelation through the very words of Scripture; from the effort, that is, which constituted for the patristic tradition the very essence of exegetical labour.

Indeed, the one serious limitation of this book is that the author can really find no room at all in his armoury for that typological or allegorical method which dominated Christian exegesis for so long. This means that there is a whole authentic line of the Church's tradition which his interpretation fails to assimilate. He is aware himself that he is liable to be criticized on this score. Allegory (or typology) opens the door to fantasy, he fears; but it may well be fantasy disciplined by tradition, and playing over a field clearly demarcated by tradition. We cannot nowadays, he declares, seriously treat Old Testament exegesis as a treasure-hunt for clues of Christ; but these are very loaded terms.

REVIEWS

THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE BIBLE. By Dom Celestin Charlier.

Translated from the French by Hubert J. Richards and Brendan Peters. (Sands & Co., Ltd.; 18s.)

There is a real sense in which a spiritual life not nourished upon the Bible is subsisting on a diet of substitutes. Many nowadays use their missals. Those parts of the missal which are not drawn directly from Holy Scripture are so closely in accord with the mind of the Church and so impregnated with scriptural ideas that diligent users of it may feel satisfied that their spiritual life is duly nourished directly by God's Word written. But many more do not use the missal, and many too, while making the rosary the back bone of their life of prayer, very seldom turn to the Gospels to fill out their meditation by dwelling upon the actual passages which recount the mysteries of our redemption. They may use prayer books and read books about prayer; but these, though doubtless good in themselves, are none the less God's word only at second hand. Those who use nothing else are feeding their souls on substitutes; better than nothing, but not the best.

There is a movement in progress within the Church to spread the practice of Bible reading amongst the faithful and to inculcate it in our schools. This movement, however, is much hindered by two things. The majority of Catholics are very hazy about what they may believe about the Bible, about the garden of Eden and the Serpent; about the creation stories; about the age of Mathusala and other Old Testament worthies; about the factual accuracy of the historical portions of Scripture and about what portions *are* historical; about the obvious contradictions that lie even on the surface of many incidents recounted in the lives of the Patriarchs. There is also the question of the morality of the Old Testament; what of the sacrifice of Isaac and Jacob's lies? So puzzling are all these problems, so dangerous does the tackling of them appear, that it seems to many better to leave the Bible severely alone, and more especially the Old Testament books.

Another thing that hinders the systematic reading of Scripture by Catholics, and this of course is not confined to Catholics, is the vagueness of their ideas about what the Bible is, what it contains and what its purpose and place is in the economy of redemption. The consequence is that they find it difficult to set about the task of reading the Bible, difficult to know where to begin and how to continue.

For these reasons the recent translation of Dom Celestin Charlier's

La Lecture Chrétienne de la Bible is a great boon to those who feel the need of answers to these questions and others like them. Here we have a safe guide to what the Bible is, how it was written and what its purpose is. We are shown how it is God's Word in its entirety and yet, quite genuinely the word of the men who wrote it or compiled it. We are introduced to the nature of the sacred history of God's chosen people and his dealings with them in the course of that history, which is the history of the coming of Salvation to men. We are initiated into the meaning of divine inspiration and its corollary absence of error. Many will read the following words with considerable surprise:

When we say, therefore, that the Bible contains no error, we use the word in its human sense and not with any metaphysical or divine connotation. Absolutely, error is the affirmation of something which does not conform to reality as it exists, independent of perception. If this is our definition of error, then the Bible bristles with errors. It states that the sun rises, and means this literally as everyone did before Galileo. It imagines the sky to be a solid, fixed vault. It allows only five thousand years to elapse between the creation and the Incarnation; it divides the work of creation into seven days; it extends the flood to cover the whole earth. There is not a page and hardly a verse which could not be pulled to pieces by philologists, philosophers, theologians and scholars of every kind. (page 216.)

This quotation illustrates how Dom Charlier deals with the question of error in the biblical narratives while faithfully following the traditional teaching of the Church, as interpreted by the most recent Papal pronouncements, and in particular by the encyclical of the present Pope *Divino afflante Spiritu*. His main concern in this book is with showing how the Bible has its centre in Christ the Redeemer, the Old Testament foreshadowing and leading up to him, the New Testament pointing to the work he came to do for our salvation.

The Christian Approach to the Bible will prove an invaluable handbook and companion to all who are ambitious to make Holy Scripture the source of their spiritual nourishment. It is to be hoped that those whose duty and privilege to teach the young will acquire it and make good use of it. These who recite the Divine Office will find it a means of enlightenment in studying and meditating on the material of their prayers. The clergy will find it of great use both for themselves and in preaching to their people on the Bible and its place in the Christian life.

The translation is an excellent piece of work. It has been done by Fr Hubert Richards, of St Edmund's, Ware, in collaboration with Fr Brendan Peters. Readers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* will find, in this number, an article under the title *The Word of God Incarnate* by Fr Richards. This article will whet their appetite for the further knowledge

It seems eminently theological to treat exegesis as an effort to read the signs, to find and understand as many as possible of what St Augustine liked to call sacraments of Christ lurking in the letter of Holy Scripture.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE BRIDGE: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies. Vol. I and II.

Edited by John M. Oesterreicher. (Pantheon Books Inc.; \$3.95.)

The purpose of *The Bridge*, according to the statement of the Editor and his collaborators, is 'to serve the dialogue between Christians and Jews'. Since this dialogue is, we consider, of major theological importance (important to theology as a vital activity, moulding the Church's life here and now), we hope fervently that Fr Oesterreicher will be successful in his purpose. The two volumes before us give a fair promise that he will.

What is especially encouraging is that the second volume does appear to be a marked improvement on the first. The field covered in both volumes is a wide one. There are contributions on the Scriptures, informative articles on *causes célèbres* affecting the Jews, such as the Dreyfus affair and the Finaly scandal, essays on literary and artistic subjects germane to the theme of *The Bridge*—worthy of special mention are an essay on 'Shylock: the Quality of Justice', and on 'Marc Chagall, Painter of the Crucified'—brief descriptions of features of Jewish rites and worship, and some excellent book reviews. But in the first volume the nobility of the master idea seems to have so awed some of the contributors, that they deemed it necessary to primp out their style with furbelows which prove only too detrimental to their matter, whose substance is aerated to the point of evanescence. Whether the Editor has exercised a sterner discipline over the contributors to the second volume, or has been able to show more discrimination, we do not know, but at any rate this defect has been largely purged out of it.

It would seem that *The Bridge* is intended for a wide public of the educated Catholic laity, and that one of its prime functions is to act as a prophylactic against the virus of anti-Semitism, from which sad experience teaches us that the Church of God is by no means immune. It is realist in that it seems to pre-suppose a lower level of biblical and theological culture than of literary education. Perhaps, indeed, it is just a little too realist. One would like to see the Editor inviting his illustrious contributors on biblical and theological topics to offer, in suitable quantities, some portions of rather stronger meat, of more detailed and specialist scholarship.

The Editor, in the 'Word of Thanks' which introduces the second

volume, reiterates the character of *The Bridge* as a specifically Catholic undertaking, and seems to decline for that reason the suggestion that he should make room in it for contributions from Jewish writers. 'We could not in conscience', he says, 'open our pages to a dispute on the basic tenets of our faith.' But while it would doubtless be undesirable to make *The Bridge* a mere vehicle of controversy, like the correspondence columns of a newspaper, it is to be hoped that future volumes will contain papers by Jews about things Jewish. For not only could this be most useful for the Catholic readers of these Yearbooks, it would also be doing something to remedy a situation noted and regretted by Fr J. E. Bruns in two of his penetrating book reviews; the fact that the majority of Jewish writers judge and condemn Christianity by its Protestant, and in particular liberal Protestant, forms. If some of these writers were invited to contribute to *The Bridge*, it would be a means of directing their attention to Christianity in its authentic, that is its Catholic form, and thus of confronting them with it not as the anti-thesis but the fulfilment of authentic, orthodox, Judaism.

These two tentative suggestions are not meant in any way as a criticism of Fr Oesterreicher's methods in the two volumes before us. But he has started something of such value and so many possibilities, that its future development is a matter of keen interest. We look forward to seeing more of these handsomely produced books, and to finding their contents of an ever higher quality.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

ORIGEN: COMMENTARY AND HOMILIES ON THE SONG OF SONGS. Tr. by R. P. Lawson. (A.C.W. Vol. XXVI: Longmans; 21s.)

This is another valuable contribution to this valuable series of patristic translations. The choice of work is judicious, presenting the reader with Origen not only at his best, but at his most typical; perhaps also at his most influential, for here we find the master images and ideas that have governed the Church's mystical tradition ever since. Not that Origen was the *fons et origo* of this tradition; but he is perhaps its earliest witness outside Scripture, and there can be little doubt that he stamped upon it the mark of his own peculiar genius.

The translation reads easily on the whole, better than a number of others which have already appeared in the series. But it is not entirely free from mistranslation, and in particular there is one rather serious error that should be pointed out. On page 108 Origen is made to say, in substance, that just as the Gentile Church had been unbelieving, and then had received mercy through the unbelief of the Jews, so one day Israel, which is now unbelieving, will receive mercy through the

unbelief of the Gentiles. But Origen in this passage is merely reproducing the doctrine of Romans II, not falsifying it for the sake of an artificial antithesis. The error is one of punctuation, and of being misled, so it would seem, by the uncritical punctuation of the original; a speech is ascribed to Israel which Origen in fact put in the mouth of the Church of the Gentiles. The translator might perhaps have suspected that she was misrepresenting Origen, when she made him so crudely misrepresent the Apostle.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

THE LITTLE BREVIARY. Compiled by T. Stallaert, C.S.S.R., tr. by the Benedictine Nuns of Stanbrook. (Burns and Oates; £4.)

This breviary is designed for the use, both private and choral, of lay people and of religious who lack the time or the Latin to recite the full Roman breviary. It is based meticulously on the Roman breviary, but all the offices are radically shortened. Thus Matins consists of just one nocturn, and Sunday Vespers of Psalm 13 divided into five sections. Nearly all the hymns are reduced to three verses only. The lay-out and the directions are thoughtful and thorough, and the technique of using it should not take long to master. It could be quite invaluable in making the riches of the Divine Office available to those who are not bound to its recitation in Latin by strict obligation.

Two further observations may be permitted. Since there is no question here of public ecclesiastical obligation, there would seem to be ample scope for experimenting with this type of shorter breviary. This volume intentionally sticks close to the Roman breviary, and only departs from it by way of abbreviation. But one would like to think that here precisely is the field for controlled liturgical experiment. To take only one example, the choice of Scripture readings for the course of the year, particularly for the weeks after Pentecost; here is a chance, one feels, to try out a more equitable distribution of Scripture passages, and to withdraw from the Machabees their somewhat unmerited usurpation of the whole of October. A very valuable experiment that might be mentioned here is *Le Bréviaire des Fidèles*, by Père Henri, O.P., which it would be good to see translated into English.

Secondly a word about the translation. The Knox version has been used for the psalms and all Scripture passages. Once again one is made to reflect how unfortunate it is that this very personal *tour de force* has been so comparatively hastily thrust into the position of almost our official English version. Here again, surely, there is a good case for experiment, for encouraging a number of Catholic translations, in

order that in due time the authorities might have a wide selection to choose from. Granted that Challoner is no longer really satisfactory, it seems vain to try and stifle the contemporary translation ferment with Knox and again Knox. One can only hope that the wide use of this Little Breviary will not lead to the Knox version being taken more and more for granted by the faithful in England as *the* Catholic version.

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

JESUS AND HIS COMING. By J. A. T. Robinson. (S.C.M. Press; 15s.)

In recent years non-Catholic scholars have been giving much attention to New Testament eschatology: they are concerned to relate the doctrine of the Last Things to the thought of the present day. Many of them, though insisting on the final consummation of all things in Christ, regard the New Testament picture of the End, not as a prediction of events, but as expressing only a conviction of God's ultimate sovereignty in him. The final scenes that are foretold belong to the realm of myth. Dr Robinson accepts this position, but would go further. His especial concern is with the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming; and his aim is to discover, from a critical study of the New Testament and particularly of the Synoptic Gospels, whether as commonly understood it formed part of Jesus's teaching or only emerged as the expectation of the Church. If the latter, how and why did it arise?

His thesis is as follows. Belief in a Second Coming exists clearly developed first in the Thessalonian Epistles, and then in the Synoptics. Yet, he would say, in the preaching of Jesus himself, as criticism lays it bare, in the earliest apostolic preaching and credal statements, and even in the early development of the Gospel themselves, the belief in another coming of Christ in glory does not appear. Christ through his death and resurrection has triumphed, the future is his, all enemies will finally be subdued; but the expectation of his return, as distinct from all this, arose within the Church and was not foretold by him. The predictions ascribed to him in the Gospels are not his own words, but result from this expectation. Jesus was concerned to proclaim the present crisis for the Jewish people, and its approaching culmination in his own death and resurrection. This would be at once his own glorification and their judgment: it would inaugurate his universal kingdom and result in the destruction of the city that had rejected him. All this was the final, the eschatological event; yet the New Testament writers, except perhaps in the fourth Gospel and the later Epistles of St Paul, failed to penetrate the full content of Jesus's teaching, separated out from it what seemed still unrealized, and expressed this, in apocalyptic terms, as a separate future act: he would come again.

Dr Robinson is an excellent scholar, and his book is valuable in the emphasis it puts on the final, the crucial, importance of Christ's first coming: that his life, death and resurrection were an 'inaugurated eschatology', that his Parousia is a present fact. Moreover, he would allow, even insist, that it was *only* inaugurated, that there was, and is, still a manifestation to the world, still a final summing-up of all things, to take place. Yet in refusing to Jesus and the earliest Church tradition an expectation of a Second Coming, the author seems to go too far. For one thing, his extreme radical criticism defeats itself: no doubt there are secondary strata in the Gospels; but he ends by giving the impression that every text that does not suit his thesis must be explained away. He lands himself in difficulties: for instance at the trial before the Sanhedrin he is driven to reconstruct Mark's text (xiv, 62) to provide a (for him) more primitive source for Matthew and Luke. Our Lord's warnings, he would say, were addressed to his own nation and time; his teaching was indeed eschatological, but ethical, like that of the prophets; not apocalyptic. One can reply that the prophets, even of the Golden Age, were not infrequently apocalyptic. And if their message was primarily to their own generation, that did not prevent its having also a fuller, distant and universal fulfilment. Surely we can allow as much to our Lord, and that he foresaw such a fulfilment. Because his words and acts are divine, and their deepest significance spiritual and timeless, so on the widest stage of world history his warnings are still relevant and his coming to be looked for at the end of this age. If his language concerning that future event is apocalyptic, we need not label it merely mythological. There are real events at the end of human history both general and individual, so alien from experience that plain terms fail us: apocalyptic is their natural expression. That Christ did not himself include among them his own return in glory, this book has failed to prove.

JOHN HIGGENS, O.S.B.

SAINT JOHN AND THE APOCALYPSE. By C. C. Martindale, s.J. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

This book is a reprint, it was first published in 1922; but that is now a long time ago, so there may be many who now come across it for the first time; to some of those many it is likely to be a great discovery. It is only a small book (150 pages) and it is, therefore, neither a complete commentary nor an exhaustive exegesis of the symbolism. It is, however, also not a mere introduction. It will introduce the reader to the Apocalypse, certainly; but it will do far more, it will help him to get to know and understand the mind of St John and the context in

which he writes; it will, I hope, start in him a real appreciation of this work as an historical document, as great literature and as essential and significant revelation. St Augustine said that an eloquent scholar should speak to instruct the inexperienced, to delight the bored and to prevail upon the reluctant. In this Fr Martindale has succeeded to perfection.

There must be very many people who feel that for them the Apocalypse were better left unexamined. Whilst indeed there are some for whom the imagery has great attraction, for the majority it seems coarse and even at times repulsive. Also whilst the other books of the New Testament are regarded as being extremely relevant to the life of the Church at all times, people tend to regard the Apocalypse as having significance only when the last trump actually sounds, and then perhaps only as a sort of 'I told you so'. Finally there are those who think this book inhuman, and by comparing the St John it portrays with the St John of the fourth gospel or of the epistles they either deny his authorship, or at best they turn their minds from the difficulty and try to ignore the book's existence. For any who feel like this, this book of Fr Martindale's is to be highly recommended.

The book starts by introducing the reader to apocalyptic literature as a whole, showing what place it has in religious expression and development. He examines the circumstances under which St John was writing and the immediate significance it would have had for its original readers. One's initial appreciation of the Apocalypse may well be formed by seeing the work in this light, and this introductory part of the book could to advantage have been treated more thoroughly. Fr Martindale then proceeds to lay open the pattern and message of the Apocalypse, and as he does so his own enthusiasm makes itself very much felt. He shows how it is no hotch-potch of visions, but a beautifully planned and worked-out whole. He constantly insists on the richness and depth of meaning conveyed in the symbolism, being very much against a narrow 'prophetic' interpretation which is liable to rob the whole work of its significance. As he explains the formation and presentation of the message in its symbolic form he lays open the mental processes of the Apostle and enriches our appreciation of him as a man as well as our understanding of his message. The symbols used are shown to be no mere fancies of the imagination but a carefully chosen and connected language with a thoroughly respectable (for the most part biblical) background. There are few people who could continue to regard them as grotesque after following this book. From Fr Martindale's exposition comes a realization of the great importance of St John's Revelation for the full understanding of Christ and of his Church—not only as it was and as it will be but also as it is now. Further, we are now able to understand more of the fulness of the depth

of the personality of St John, who both saw and handled the Word of Life and took his mother to his own, and who was shown him as the Son of Man with eyes as a flame of fire and in his mouth a two-edged sword.

Those who up to now may have been reluctant, inexperienced or bored with the Apocalypse, through reading Fr Martindale may well find a treasure which enriches their life.

G.R.H.

BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM. By Maurice Percheron. (Longmans; 6s.)

The *Men of Wisdom* series is now sufficiently well-known to make it unnecessary to say more in general about this recent addition than that it maintains the high standards of its predecessors. The reproductions which make this series so remarkably telling are once again of very high quality, allowing for their size: it should be noted that by far the greater number illustrate later developments in Buddhist art and thought (there is nothing from Ajanta, for instance). Perhaps this will help to bring home to English readers the inadequacies of the old Rhys Davids picture of Buddhism. Even since the work of Conze (who reviewed the present work rather crossly and unjustly in the *Manchester Guardian*), there is still need in England of accounts of Buddhist thought which do not regard Mahayana Buddhism as simply a corruption of the original purity of the Tradition. Mr Edmund Stapleton is to be congratulated on his care in transposing the transliteration of Sanskrit and Pali from the French into the English convention, and for his tactful adaptations of the bibliography and the chronological table.

C.E.

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